Classical Bodies, Musical Throats and an Accommodating Religion.

Recovering the Acting Codes of the Romantic Drama

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ABSTRACT

Classical Bodies, Musical Throats and an Accommodating Religion.
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Concordia University, 2020

Classical Bodies, Musical Throats and an Accommodating Religion explores the origins of the modern drama from a director's perspective, with special focus on the "language of cry and gesture", the acting language of the early Romantic repertory. The purpose of the study is to reconstruct the acting codes of the melodrama, the first dramatic genre to appear on the Romantic stage, based on the workshops and subsequent productions of *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie (co-director Louis Patrick Leroux) and *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner which I directed for the Concordia University's D.B. Clarke Theatre in 2010-2011 and, respectively, for Le Théâtre de l'Utopie in Montreal in 2013 (Büchner's Bicentenary) in view of further applications to the modern repertory.

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Introduction

fig. 1 Joy, Marie Pascale. *Leonce and Lena*. Photo © Marie-Charlotte Aubin, 2013.

Introduction

"It is very likely that never in human history have there been as many treatises, essays, theories and analyses focused on culture as there are today. This fact is even more surprising given that culture, in the meaning traditionally ascribed to the term, is now on the point of disappearing. And perhaps it has already disappeared, discreetly emptied of its content, and replaced by another content that distorts its earlier meaning." (Vargas Llosa, Mario, Notes on the Death of Culture: Essays on Spectacle and Society, 2015)

In March 1981, I participated, together with my classmates from the UNATC I.L. Caragiale at Bucharest, in the 60th Anniversary of the Romanian Communist Party's Celebrations, with a small role as a comrade-in-arms of Elena Ceausescu.[1] The cast was composed of theatre, dance, music and fine arts students working together on a collage of political speeches and archived visual materials, adapted and co-directed by a group of professional theatre, film and television directors. The tableau I was in featured Comrade Elena and her female followers at the fateful May Day picnic where she would meet her future husband, Comrade Nicolaie. We, the female chorus, were supposed to applaud and cheer the speeches delivered by the leading couple and then join them in a romantic waltz across the vast stage of the Youth Palace, with the male chorus as dancing partners.

Conducted in conditions of maximum security, with the actors' rooms separated from the stage area by metal doors guarded by the military, the rehearsal process gradually became a nightmare of boredom and irritation. Some of us found our escape in the little concertos our colleagues from the Conservatory of Music improvised in the backstage bathrooms, the only areas the security agents could not freely haunt.

It all started in the ladies' bathroom where a violinist was studying a piece by Scarlatti for the upcoming examination session, and it swiftly evolved into a regular practice in which all the portable instruments were put to work in all kinds of formats—solos, trios and quartets—and all genres, including chamber music, opera and cafe concert, were performed. The public was composed of the actors and staff not needed on stage at the time, all standing in a semicircle around the occasional performer. Access to the cubicles was soon blocked and the entire room morphed into an auditorium, with the men's bathroom left to accommodate both genders.

Meanwhile, the ‘real’ show stumbled away on stage, becoming more and more hectic with the frequent changes brought by the Propaganda Bureau to the initial staging. From one day to the next, the chorus became mute so as to avoid upstaging the protagonists' speeches, and the wine bottles for the picnic were replaced with thermoses and teacups in order to indicate the high moral standards of the working class. Comrade Elena's dress changed from a yellow swing frock to an off-white bridal affair, then changed again to a light blue summer dress, supposedly the live character’s favorite color. All these adjustments entailed radical changes in the lighting plot, from a daytime atmosphere to a full moon effect and back to daylight for the protagonists’ monologues.

Finally, the male ballet dancers were replaced by students from other programs, mostly Engineering, where the male look was closer to the Party's idea of virility. They were then

replaced again by cadets from the military and police academies. All were sadly devoid of dancing skills but were deemed more suggestive of the revolutionary youths they had to portray.

An eerie situation appeared, with one ‘regular’ production building up on stage and another ‘underground’ show running behind the scenes, in which the roles of spectator and actor became perfectly interchangeable. Both cast and crew moved fluidly from one setting to the other, passing back and forth through the metal doors guarded by sentinels who changed posts every four hours as per military rules.

It all ended with the head of security bringing in female agents who joined the male troop in the restoration of the lavatories to their original purposes; the musical instruments were shut in a cupboard to be returned to their owners on written demand signed by the musical director, and singing was cancelled by turning the loudspeakers in the room to full volume. At the dress rehearsal, the entire security detail integrated the mass scenes, apparently to practice the sealing off of the theatre in view of Ceausescu's arrival, but in reality, to prevent any kind of rebellious manifestation on the part of the cast.

The opening night was done entirely on playback, with yet another cast of characters unexpectedly introduced in the mass scenes: guards in plain clothes, holsters prominent at their armpits, headsets stuck in their ears, mixing with our designated dance partners to prevent all direct contact between audience and stage. It was the predictable but nonetheless unsettling conclusion to an experiment conducted with a new generation of artists in a particularly twisted set of circumstances such as crippling censorship, the cult of personality brought to mystic dimensions and cryptic resistance. It was atypical, in many ways, of other theatrical experiences within the Eastern Bloc, but the danger of disappearance was almost palpable. Rethinking theatre "in the meaning traditionally ascribed to the term" became, under these circumstances, a sort of

rescuing mission.

Another fateful event was the staging of Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft,* which I co-directed with Louis Patrick Leroux at Concordia University in 2010 as part of "Hypertext and Performance: A Resonant Response to Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft*", a larger research project dedicated to the recovery of forgotten plays by British female dramatists of the early nineteenth century.[2] Yet another rescuing mission was born from this experience, with a purely aesthetic goal to be described in detail in Chapter 3 of the present study. However, its beginning merits a separate discussion, as it mirrors, if only partially, my encounter with the 'end of theatre' in 1985 Romania.

The first rehearsal was strange in every aspect: we read the play in an atmosphere of diffidence slowly turning into agitation. Half of the dialogue proved undecipherable to the cast, despite the efforts of the dialectician attached to the team to translate 'live' entire chunks of text written in eighteenth-century upper class and lower class Scottish; as a result, both cast and crew disengaged from the reading, barely paying attention to their cues. The small parts ceased to listen to the leads' speeches, technicians played blatantly with their smartphones, and designers withdrew to doze off behind the colorful sketches pinned to the bulletin board.

Chairs squeaked, water bottles rolled under the tables, pages flew off as some of the actors started to browse through the research materials offered by the dramaturgical team. I did not know what to do to stir their imagination; the piece was dead to us all, dead and buried, excavated for excavation's sake; it was at best a corpse, waiting to be dissected in an anatomical theatre. Then I remembered the music softening the harsh lights and shiny tiles in the bathroom at the Youth Palace and asked for a Scottish ballad, if anyone could sing such a piece and would do it *a cappella*. Immediately, the whole studio came to life; the piano was opened, two actresses

who had been in a glee club offered to sing pieces from their repertory, and at least three piano players emerged from the cast who offered to accompany the singers. After half an hour of musical performance, we resumed the reading with the piano playing in the background. As the reading progressed, I asked the singers to respond to the actors delivering their soliloquies, an exercise in antiphony which we used later on in some of the love scenes of the show. By the end of the reading, the entire cast was moving to the rhythm of the music, some still seated, gently swaying to the tune, others trying dance steps around the room; the result was that the atmosphere became 'vivified' and remained so for the whole of the rehearsal period.

What links these two experiences is the idea that theatre seemed lost and I had to recover it; historical circumstances, cultural contexts, and different theatrical practices apart, the sense of a mission I had to fulfill was equally poignant whence my mentioning the 1985 rather extraordinary event in relation to the 2010 *Witchcraft* experience.

0.1. Look back in wonder

But which was that theatre that was lost and had to be found? What was the idea of theatre I was chasing in 1985? Was it the same idea I was still chasing twenty-five years later? It is a question which has haunted generation after generation of artists of the twentieth century and continues to haunt today's stage, with many responses to it which I will divide, roughly, in two categories: one, which gathers the theories of theatre focusing on the audience's activities within the performance, and the second, which groups the theories of theatre focusing on the actor's activities during the performance.

Again, roughly speaking, the first set of theories define the actor-spectator relationship as an interplay in which both parts ‘act’, become 'actors' and, ultimately, become co-authors for the duration of the performance, whereas the second redeems the actor-spectator *agon* at the basis of the traditional theatre, in which the actor enables and regulates the interplay for the entire duration of the show.

The difference lies in the approach to acting and may seem minimal if we consider the feature of aesthetics integral to the concept of performance, or if we assimilate acting with a mode of behaviour specific to a set of conditions similar to the theatrical conventions.

A brief examination of Erika Fischer-Lichte’s definition of performance will show that this difference, far from being minimal, is fundamental to the process of re-thinking theatre in the last century. Following Erika Fischer-Lichte:

> We can define a performance as any event in which all the participants find themselves in the same place at the same time, partaking in a circumscribed set of activities. The participants can be actors or spectators, and the roles of these actors and spectators may switch, so that the same person could fulfill the part of an actor for a given period of time, and then turn into an observer. The performance is created out of the interactions of participants.[3]

The ‘bodily co-presence’ of actors and spectators is the pre-condition of any performance and “the interplay of their actions and behavior constitutes the performance, while the performance constitutes them as actors and spectators. It is only when they take part in the performance that individuals turn into actors and spectators".[4]

The difference between the concept of theatre and the concept of performance is that theatre necessarily involves 'staging' , an event which precedes the theatrical event, in which the

actors develop, rehearse and fix the strategies that determine “the manner in which people, objects and noises will appear (and disappear) on stage during the performance”.[5] In a performance, this 'given staging concept' which constitutes the foundation of theatre coincides with the event; it lives and dies with the reality it creates, for “a performance is inseparable from the bodily co-presence of various groups of people who come together as actors and spectators” and it is this bodily co-presence that “enables the aesthetic experience of a performance by the participants”.[6]

Again, according to Fischer-Lichte, we can define theatre as an event in which the pre-set, staged part determines the course of action, with the actors/artists as autonomous subjects, creators of an autonomous work of art and the autopoietic feedback loop, consisting of the mutual interaction between actors and spectators as motor of the performance.[7]

There is a major trap here, namely, to see theatre as yet another form of performance—at best, a 'twin' art—and thus view the relationship between the two concepts as reminiscent of the previous rhetoric and drama twinship, a trap which Fischer-Lichte avoids by redefining theatre in terms of emergence, a phenomenon that shapes the performance which theatre experiences as an effect of the autopoietic feedback loop:

> The feedback loop functions as a self-organizing system which must permanently integrate newly emerging, unplanned, and unpredictable elements. For the actors, these elements include, most prominently, the spectators' behaviour and actions together with their own or their colleagues' reactions … From the audience's viewpoint, all elements flowing into the autopoiesis of the feedback loop constitute emerging phenomena.[8]

The reversal of roles, the unplanned interactions, and the situations of liminality that transform the participants of the performance are all effects of autopoiesis, and it is only in theatre that the

circumstances in which the event takes place are thoroughly 'prepared', set up in advance and tested for their aesthetic effect through the rehearsal process conducted by the group of artists-authors of the event.

It follows that acting and performing are not identical twins, and any form of performance which uses acting to create aesthetics will be defined as theatre. This brings us to the second category of responses regarding the specificity of the medium, which I will review in the next paragraph.

0.2. Questions and answers

The second category of responses to the question regarding the specificity of theatre stems from the exploration of the origins of drama by the theatre artists involved in the regeneration of the medium. With some exceptions—the anthropological 'turn' redeeming rituals, for example—these explorations seem to 'stop' at the theatre of the Antiquity, or at that particular form of performance "which at that time meant European theatre or, more precisely, ancient Greek theatre".[9] They are circumscribable to the larger "search for origins and the construction of genealogies" initiated in the last decades of the nineteenth century, after the publication of the groundbreaking works of Charles Darwin and Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Descent of Man* (1871) and, respectively, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872).[10]

Nietzsche's placement of the origins of drama in the rituals of regeneration of the Greek Antiquity especially brings into focus the sacrality of the theatrical performance—lost to the modern stage due to the extensive desacralization of theatre in the aftermath of the French

Revolution—and thus redirects the search towards the mystical portents of the encounter between actor and spectator. Acting becomes a sacred art and a sacred profession, which changes the perspective on the 'technical' component of the actor's training as well as the general view of the stage as a place ruled by convention, stuffy and obsolete like any other form of 'bourgeois' entertainment. One particularly interesting result of this resacralization of the stage through acting is Jerzy Grotowski's "paratheatre", which reshapes the European dramatic performance along the lines of the Far East's spiritual practices by introducing various yoga techniques in the acting system devised for his Laboratory Theatre (Warsaw–Lodz, 1970–1980). This "New Agey" quality of Grotowski's aesthetic makes his acting method look somewhat dated, but what his system essentially provides is a means to understand theatre as a site for religious experience.[11]

The search for the origins of drama which aims at the recovery of commedia dell'arte is also part of the process of resacralization of the modern stage, in the sense that it endows the actor with 'demiurgical' attributes. The commedia actor generates the performance and is both creator of the theatrical reality and master of the interplay between the participants; his presence 'entrances' the audience, makes the spectator 'commune' with the stage, and ensures the 'exemplary' quality of the theatrical experience. As Dario Fo remarks:

> This dramatic quality and originality (of the commedia dell'arte) are not determined, as some people seem to believe, by the use of masks or by the appearance of the characters in fixed stereotypes, but by a genuinely revolutionary approach to making theatre, and by the unique role assumed by the actors. I am in overall sympathy with those scholars who would prefer to tag this kind of theatre not Commedia dell'Arte but 'actors' theatre'. The entire theatrical structure rests on their shoulders: the actor-performer is author, producer, storyteller, director; he will be required to pass from lead actor to supporting role at a

> moment's notice, and will astonish, with his continual twists and turns, not only the audience but also his fellow actors . . . Often the play ended up going nowhere, or became mawkish with the laughter an end in itself, but that all depended on how successful the actor-manager was in instilling a sense of rigour in his company; it depended principally on native talent, and on the understanding established between the company and the audience.[12]

Recent criticism abounds in descriptions of the commedia dell'arte magical realities that are more elaborate and more sophisticated, but I chose this quotation from Dario Fo's *Manual for Actors* precisely for the 'down-to-earth' quality of the discourse.[13] Essentially, what Dario Fo describes in this down-to-earth fashion is a theatrical interpretation of Genesis, with the actor as demiurge—creator of shadows or illusions of reality—which reflects the platonic foundation of the original system.

In his 1952 adaptation of *The Servant of Two Masters* by Carlo Goldoni, Giorgio Strehler, famous director of the Piccolo Theatre in Milan and an important figure of the 'new Renaissance' (Dario Fo's term), reconstructed the biblical Genesis almost literally in order to prove the sacred origin of the commedia performance.

The play is still part of each season of the Piccolo Theatre, with some inevitable changes in the original cast but still graced by the presence of Ferruccio, the actor who played the original 1952 Arlecchino, over half of the actual run. Each performance starts with the ritualistic lighting of the candles in the immense chandelier placed on the proscenium, later to rise to the ceiling all lights ablaze while the actors continue to light the footlights, *la rampa*, until the entire stage is 'properly' lit; once 'revealed', the stage fills with music played live from behind the curtains, which remain drawn until the last mesh takes fire and the last actor exits through a door

previously used by the audience to access their seats.

The curtains are white and so are the actors' costumes—neutral overalls in neutral whites—and with their successive exiting, shadows start to form behind the see-through hangings; soon these shadows form a chorale who sings to the tune of the hidden band until one of the singers breaks through the white hangings and starts pulling them open to reveal Arlecchino in his traditional gear, mask and all, dozing off centre stage. The chorale disbands at the end of the song and its members take up their roles as servants at the inn where the action takes place.

Artistic creation imitates God's work, which is easy to see in the actions performed by the actors at the beginning of the performance; whatever happens before or after the prologue is part of the darkness that the chandelier and the footlights dispel at the beginning of the show, part of the chaos preceding the genesis. This type of prologue is usually absent from the scenarios that have survived the disappearance of commedia dell'arte from the European mainstage. Dario Fo calls it a "technical beginning", which helps establish that "understanding between the company and the audience" that enables the theatrical illusion.[14] Sometimes, this technical opening is embedded in the actual prologue delivered by the *capo comico,* the actor-manager of the company. Such is the case of *Arlecchino, Emperor of the Moon* (Anonymous, 1684) where Arlecchino, freshly landed onstage, describes the stars he has 'ignited' with his own hand while flying up in the sky and motivates his refusal to serve as train carrier to Dame Comet by the length of her tail which would have delayed his arrival on earth "in time for dinner".[15]

But the rising of the chandelier, the lighting of the footlights and all the other preparatory stages of the show appear in the visual materials, engravings, paintings, and book illustrations of the period; some other times, these preparations were simply 'handed down' from one generation

of actors to the other, and still were at the time of Strehler's reconstruction.[16]

The seductiveness of Dario Fo's definition lies in the possibility for every professional of the stage to visualize this type of theatre, to conjure it up from bits and pieces, from the stage lore that passes down from master to theatre student and from old actors to younger ones; it also presents the advantage of working beyond words and outside the constraints of literature without creating generic confusions. For if Dario Fo puts the actor in charge of generating text, he also differentiates between acting and storytelling by identifying 'speech' with 'spoken action'. The actor's performance, composed of movement, sound and speech, creates the story, and only those writers who understand this rule are capable of writing for the theatre. By inference, 'true' playwriting comes from practice, an idea which scholars will always try to refute but which stands as the golden rule of the acting profession:

> Croce, who deserves full credit for emphasizing the high professionalism of the players, was, nonetheless, obsessed with the dogma – 'no (literary-dramaturgical) script, no art'. But let us, at least for the moment, not be drawn into polemics. It is sufficient to underline one point which derives, not from a reading of the texts, but above all from practice: the Commedia dell'Arte is a form of theatre based on a combination of dialogue and action, on spoken monologue and performed gesture, and not on mime alone. In spite of what Croce asserts, if they had relied exclusively on a series of somersaults, dances, poses and moves, the players would never have been able to make anything work.[17]

In other words, the stage belongs to the initiates, and going back to the origins of theatre represents a journey of initiation into the mysteries of the acting profession.

0.3. A possible route

My position is by now clearly defined: of the two paths leading to the recovery of the modern drama, I have chosen the more 'seductive' one, the way back to the Renaissance theatre, which establishes the professional actor and the idea of professionalism as pre-conditions for the aesthetic experience. With hindsight, I could not have taken another path, for my very existence as a theatre professional, continually challenged in the first stages of my career, claimed its right to survival. I could easily identify with the commedia dell'arte artists who faced the same adversities and challenges I was facing: the heavy censorship, the gradual disappearance of all meaning through the use of hollow symbols in daily life, and the relentless attack of propaganda against tradition, religion and spirituality. Cardinal Borromeo, a pillar of the Counter Reformation in sixteenth-century Italy, is a perfect example of the kind of censor I met with at every preview, and the preamble to his plea for the annihilation of theatre, addressed to Pope Innocent XIII, is relevant for the parallel:

> We, anxious to root out this evil plant [lewd expressions, immoral statements], have prepared bonfires of scripts with offensive material, have spared no effort to extirpate them from the memories of men and have, at the same time, determined to pursue those responsible for their publication and circulation. Nonetheless, it has become clear that while we were asleep, the Devil has been at work with renewed cunning. How much more deeply does that which the eyes see penetrate into the soul than that which is read in the pages of a book! How much more grievously does the word uttered by the voice and supported by gesture wound the mind of the young than the dead word printed in books! The Devil, through the work of the actors, spreads his poison.[18]

And here is the counter plea written by Nicola Barbieri, the famous actor playing the Lombard zanni, Beltrame, equally significant for the professionals embroiled in the ideological fight:

> What is the purpose of those who, idly speaking of Comedians, feel the need to take up arms against these wretched crickets, as if they were about to wage war on a host of lions, all on account of idle rumours, which tar by the same brush Comedians and those who enjoy Comedies, as if they spoke of heretics, assassins, thieves, murderers, blasphemers or moneylenders, with such exaggeration of address, and in such thunderous tones as if this [theatre business] were a grievous, impardonable sin, or worse, a sacrilegious act? … A Comedy well made is a worthy entertainment; to watch it without malicious thought but filled with the desire to avoid human mistakes is a worthy enterprise; to watch a comedy for entertainment, only, is naturally restful; and whoever is capable to do good without ever watching a play, or taking any other form of entertainment, it's good for that person; but since one needs to clear one's mind in order to be in good health, the best way to preserve one's soundness of mind is, by far, to entertain oneself by watching a good comedy, which is the best of all entertainments, fairly inexpensive, and always ready to provide some piece of knowledge worth acquiring.[19]

More than these literal and perhaps 'automatic' cultural associations, my searching for a model of theatre among the other Renaissance cultural models was similar to the quest for 'modernity' the Italian actors had engaged in over the same period; it meant working towards a renaissance of the theatre with the methods of the Renaissance, in the sense originally ascribed to the term, that of novelty sprung from the recovery of old forms, using as a starting point the actor's vocabulary, that 'bag of tricks' which Dario Fo puts at the basis of all theatrical systems.

The 2010–2011 *Witchcraft* project put me in the same position, except that the 'bag of

tricks' I had acquired in my previous incursion into the theatrical world of the Italian Renaissance seemed useless at first sight and had to be spilled and rearranged after the acting principles set by the author, Joanna Baillie, before I could use (some of) them for the reconstruction of the Romantic performance vocabulary.

Once again, I stood at the brink of the unknown, for even though Joanna Baillie's period is far better documented—both historically, and in terms of conceptualization—than the commedia dell'arte Golden Age, the new acting theories applicable to the new theatrical repertory created by Joanna Baillie seemed completely inaccessible to modern understanding.

All the dramatists of the early nineteenth century claim absolute novelty, but Joanna Baillie also produced a treatise describing her 'dramaturgical plan' in which acting featured as the major component, and expressly commanded the theatre companies to apply her acting theory to the eventual production of her plays. I had to follow the author's prescriptions if the exercise was to have any significance beyond that of an academic prowess and, in the absence of any material remains of the special kind of acting Baillie required for her dramaturgy—all we had was a tape of the *Witchcraft* production premiered at the Finborough Theatre in London, 1997—the task looked ominous.[20]

There was a common denominator to my present and previous searches for a theatrical model: my feeling that theatre speaks through images, that it is a visual art, or nothing at all. Or as Cardinal Borromeo puts it: theatre would be "that which the eyes see" and which can "penetrate into the soul" of the beholder much deeper and more poignantly than "dead word printed in books".[21] The idea that theatre possesses a language of its own, which is essentially visual, perfectly fits the commedia dell'arte model; the dialogue, for instance, can be construed as a 'verbal actualization of the plot' which makes the spoken part of the actor's delivery an

additional means of creating character and spatial configuration. For example, the Latin vocabulary used by Dottore in his love speeches adds to his 'owlish' appearance: flapping magister's robes, oversized eyeglasses, hopping gait, and all those 'scholarly' features the image of Minerva's bird does not necessarily evoke, such as ineffective erudition, distracted mind, and stunted desire.[22]

Another example is Arlecchino's 'spinning' monologue from *Arlecchino, Emperor of the Moon* which indicates the actions performed by the character in the opening *lazzi*:

> Everything is spinning, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky and the earth with everything in it, the bees, the fish, and even the clocks, and the thoughts in my head, all these spin, continuously; then pray tell, why can't you, wretched wheel, start spinning too?[23]

The *lazzi* preceding Arlecchino's monologue consists of a sequence of circular movements around the stage and around the character's own body that embody the Copernican concept of the 'revolution of the celestial spheres', declared as heretical by the religious and civil authorities of the period and banned from all public discussion. The monologue verbalizes the image wrought by Arlecchino's spinning, and this permits the actor to abandon verbal expression in case of a formal interdiction of speech on behalf of the authorities, without endangering the overall meaning of his performance. These examples suggest that far from being a crutch for 'illiterate' performers, the visual codes developed by the commedia dell'arte actor-authors constituted a highly refined communication system able to transcend cultural barriers; the problem was that the commedia dell'arte practitioners never developed a real notation system, mostly due to the improvisation methods they used for generating text.[24] The term *lazzi,* for instance, applied equally to linguistic and non-linguistic expression, and it is no wonder that half of the scenarios in Flaminio Scala's 1613 anthology are composed of short 'annotations' such as:

"*Isabella appears at her window. Enters Pulcinella with his guitar. Lazzi".* These annotations, in most cases, concentrate in a few sentences the entire content of a scene, an act, or even an entire play. Clearly, only the professional actors, directors, and managers knew how to read these texts and had the concrete means to translate into images the few dry words printed in the script. Dario Fo's 'bag of tricks' represents exactly that: a collection of 'recipes' for building a particular role, handling a particular mask, composing a particular speech, to be handed down from master to student together with the personal inventions and adjustments each master added to the basic paraphernalia.[25]

The image-based acting code of commedia dell'arte comes forth as "the language of theatre" in Dario Fo's attempt to reconstruct the *grammelot,* a hypothetically universal tongue derived from the linguistic *lazzis* of the zanni, the comic Servants of the Italian repertory. A mixture of dialectal and idiomatic expressions, phonetic mimicry of dead and modern tongues and onomatopoeia, the *grammelot* appears as a sort of *lingua franca* that his character, Johan Padan, a Venetian refugee who sails with Columbus to the Americas, 'picks up' during his travels. The name of Johan Padan is the result of a verbal *lazzi,* a word game accompanying a burlesque improvisation in which a character crushes his powerful but stupid opponent under a heap of sarcasms and insults. The historical context in which the character evolves suggests that the German patronymic, Johan(n), is used by Dario Fo with the insulting connotation of 'mercenary' (hired soldier, usually a foreigner) as well as the name Padan which takes the no less demeaning connotation of 'peasant' (inhabitant of the Paduan countryside, an inlander despised by the Venetian mariners), these insulting labels being freely bestowed on the participants in the sixteenth-century wars between the papal states and the Roman Germanic Empire. The new patronymic, Johan Padan, becomes a metaphor of the 'displaced', (naïve

peasant turned soldier, then deserter and refugee) and creates a new 'mask' which bears the features of the zanni (the naïve peasant) and those of the Capitan (foreign mercenary) complete with a new idiom, part regional dialect, part foreign 'tongue', called 'grammelot' (senseless grumbling). Most of the *grammelot* vocabulary used by Dario Fo in *Johan Padan and the Discovery of the Americas* (1971) fails to apply to any other zanni except Johan Padan, or indeed to other commedia dell'arte characters whose wanderings match his explorations; nevertheless, it is an entirely 'stage born' language which shows the capacity of the commedia dell'arte author-player to create imagery by way of words, a lingua franca of theatre. Unfortunately, this stage born idiom could not function as a glossary for Joanna Baillie's text. Joanna Baillie's contacts with the London stage players were strictly personal as she made a point of never attending rehearsals, neither for her own productions (she directed her tragedy *De Montfort* by correspondence) nor for those famous productions of Shakespeare's plays featuring her actress friend, Sarah Siddons. This made Elisabeth Inchbald observe, with the occasion of the opening of *De Montfort,* that "her drama, of original and very peculiar formation, plainly denotes that the authoress has studied theatrical productions as a reader more than a theatrical spectator".[26]

Joanna Baillie's detachment is explained by the fact that, for most of the Romantic poets, 'reading' and 'seeing' were similar experiences in the sense that both actions engaged the reader/viewer in a sort of 'voyeuristic' experience in which the 'hidden' nature of man was revealed; reading "was like seeing the performance of a play" for it provided the reader with "an absorption that was not opposed to theatricality but rather predicated upon it".[27]

Her ultimate goal as a playwright was to create poetic images which would produce a state of 'intellectual' arousal in the spectator, with the actor playing 'medium' for the experience in case the play reached the production stage. Inchbald's objection addresses Baillie's method of

visualizing the character which she senses as ‘alien’ to the methods of theatre because of the ‘over-psychologization’ of her heroes’ speeches which forces the actor to perform in a manner eventually seen in the patients of a madhouse.[28]

Unexpectedly, Dario Fo’s reconstruction of the commedia dell’arte model appeared to work in the case of Büchner's 'peculiar dramatic formation' entitled *Leonce and Lena.* I use the word “unexpectedly” in view of the similarity between the positions of the two authors in relation to the stage practices of the period, for Georg Büchner was as much an outsider to the German theatre of the Romantic period as Joanna Baillie was to the British Romantic stage, and even more so because of his complete isolation from the respective theatrical milieu. His texts were published posthumously and his correspondence (though heavily edited by his brother) does not reveal any direct connection with the contemporary theatre circles. *Leonce and Lena,* however, displays a knowledge of the theatrical world only a seasoned professional could have mustered. Its ‘peculiar’ form springs from the subtle combination between the two dramaturgical models which constitute the foundation of the play: one, borrowed from the commedia dell'arte, with the master-servant (Leonce-Valerio) relationship at the centre of the construction, and the second, borrowed from the medieval mystery drama, with the Lovers’ mystical union (represented by Leonce and Lena's wedding) at the centre of its architecture.

From a literary perspective, the text might appear as a ‘play within a play’ except that the two structures are not concentric—e.g. the characters do not go in and out of a ‘dream’ situation but live in limbo, in between worlds—which threatens the stylistic coherence of the performance.

From the commedia actor's point of view, changing vocabularies in mid-performance would have been a matter of course, but such sudden changes appeared conventional, even

artificial, to the contemporary player in view of the new theories of 'natural' acting developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Moreover, the improvisation system which enabled such changes seemed cancelled under the conditions of pre-written dialogue and it would take a good hundred years and more until the re-theatricalization movement would rediscover this compositional tool.[29]

Yet Büchner's theatrical discourse reveals its unity if we look at it through the lens of melodrama, that new form of dramaturgy, spectacle-oriented, which at the dawn of the nineteenth century takes over the accepted dramatic genres.[30] In fact, if we adopt Peter Brooks' definition of melodrama as "a fully realized, coherent theatrical mode whose structures and characteristics, in their purity and even crudity, can teach us to read a whole body of modern literature with a finer perception of its project", then Büchner's patched up play will cease to appear as a peculiar formation.[31] And so does Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft*, whose mixture of spoken soliloquy, comic dialogue, pantomime, and musical accompaniment recalls the melodrama model imagined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the previous century.

More importantly, I could recognize in these two most 'peculiar' plays some of the structures and characteristics of the original *melodramma* or *teatro per musica,* the experimental theatrical model created in the seventeenth century by the famous commedia dell'arte actor-manager Giovanni Battista Andreini; it was the breakthrough I was hoping for and it proved essential to my discovery of the visualization techniques and, respectively, of the ecstatic techniques used in melodramatic acting.[32]

This concludes my exploration of the practice-based theories about the regeneration of theatre developed in the twentieth century. I have focused especially on the recovery by Dario Fo of the commedia dell'arte model for reasons that range from deep understanding of his working

process to utmost fascination with his way of conjuring up the image of the 'actor's theatre' shaped by the Renaissance artists. Since Dario Fo's interest in melodrama was, at best, marginal (as attested by his pursuit of the *giullare*, the medieval jester, finally captured in *Mistero Bufo*) my exploration of the original *melodramma* was only marginally inspired by his reconstruction of the commedia dell'arte model.

In the next section I will review my encounters with the artists-thinkers that have contributed to the recovery of the original concept.

0.4. Enter Melodrama

A few clarifications are necessary at this point: the original form, called *melodramma or teatro per musica*, appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century as the result of a scientific project initiated and developed by Italian actor-manager Giovanni Battista Andreini with his *Fedeli* troupe, under the patronage of the French queen, former Florentine princess Maria de Medici.[33]

The project consisted of a series of experiments in sensual cognition in which Andreini established rules for physical acting meant to enhance the sensual quality of the theatrical performance. Apparently, the scope of the endeavour was to make libertine philosophy escape the Counter Reformation censorship and reach the general public. The works of the libertine philosophers circulated, clandestinely, in various literary forms—letters, dialogues, fantasy novels—in the intellectual circles of the period, and even though Andreini's connection to the Parisian libertine circles remains uncertain, it is generally understood that the ban on his most

‘outrageous’ creation, *Amor nello specchio* (“Love in the Mirror”), was issued in retaliation to the ‘atheistic’ ideas exposed in the play.[34] The ban terminated Andreini’s career at the French court.[35] His new experimental model, entirely practice born, faded into oblivion after the death of the *Fedeli* actors who had participated in the experiment; his other plays which dramatize his theory of theatre were recovered in the last decades of the twentieth century and constitute the sole proof of his attempt to revolutionize the theatre of the Baroque.

Andreini's vision of theatre as a 'symphony played on an infinite variety of instruments’, *una sinfonia d'infiniti strumenti'*, with the actor's body as the leading 'instrument' in the *concerto* (the performance) laid the foundation for the *opera comique*, *l’opera buffa,* a musical genre born at the meeting point of several practices—commedia dell'arte, pantomime, ballet, musical performance, and puppetry—which inspired many generations of composers and librettists well into the nineteenth century.

The modern melodrama appears at the height of the encyclopedists' search for the origins of language, possibly as a theatrical actualization of what Denis Diderot called “the language of humanity in its cradle”. Its association with classical pantomime, which in the late eighteenth century meant “a drama accompanied by music”, refers to the artistic use of gesture and sound in the Roman (Etruscan) pantomimical genre in which Denis Diderot and Louis de Jaucourt, the author of the specific entry in the Encyclopedie, identify the origins of pre-linguistic expression. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Le devin de village* (“The Village Quack”), and even more so, his dramatic poem *Pygmalion,* bear certain resemblances to the Italian *melodramma* in that sense that both pieces recuperate the musical design of the generally called ‘popular drama’ with the scope of recovering ‘the particular dynamic of conciliation between spoken text and music’, *'la conciliation entre le texte parlé et la musique*' which characterizes the *teatro per musica.*[36] Jean-

Jacques Rousseau calls his projects of theatrical restoration *operas,* while his friend and critic, Denis Diderot, calls Rousseau's attempts to write for the musical theatre mere exercises in elevating popular spectacle to the level of intellectual entertainment, done by 'a great poet who dabbles in music', '*un grand poète, qui serait en même temps un peu musicien*'.[37]

With Diderot, melodrama moves out of the musical genre to enter the domain of theatre, more precisely, of pantomime (*la pantomime dramatique*) from which it reemerges as a visual object, a *dramma per pittura* if I were to coin a term for it. The key to this transformation is the concept of image which shapes Diderot's poetic and changes the perspective on theatre as a rhetorical art.

0.5. The pictorial turn

Diderot may have been the initiator of what J.T. Mitchell defines as "the pictorial turn" in the human sciences, the "paradigm shift" happening in twentieth century philosophy when "the assumption that language is paradigmatic to meaning" gives way to the assumption that the codes and conventions that underlie nonlinguistic symbol systems also produce meaning.[38] As Mitchell explains:

> In Europe one might identify it (the pictorial turn) with . . . Derrida's 'grammatology', which de-centers the 'phonocentric' model of language by shifting attention to the visible, material traces of writing; or with Michel Foucault's insistence on a history and theory of power/knowledge that exposes the rift between the discursive and the 'visible', the seeable and the sayable, as the crucial fault-line in 'sceptic regimes'. Above all I would locate the

> philosophical enactment of the pictorial turn in the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein, particularly in the apparent paradox of a philosophical career that began with a 'picture theory' of meaning and ended with the appearance of a kind of iconoclasm, a critique of imagery that led him to renounce his earlier pictorialism and say: 'A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat itself to us inexorably.' . . . This anxiety, this need to defend 'our speech' against 'the visual' is, I want to suggest, a sure sign that a pictorial turn is taking place.[39]

It is precisely this anxiety that moves Vargas Llosa to announce the end of culture, and by extension, the end of drama in the "age of spectacle" (a concept of Guy Debord) which Llosa uses as a basis for his theory—an anxiety that Diderot, the philosopher, did not experience.[40] The visual eloquence of theatre was exactly that: a code underlying the nonlinguistic symbol systems built on stage and for the stage, an image underlying the actor's movements which would 'absorb' the spectator.

With these in mind, I will return to the title of my present study—*Classical bodies, musical throats and an accommodating religion*—which I borrowed from Valerio's last monologue in *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner.[41] It captures the image I had in front of my eyes at the beginning of my journey towards the origins of the modern drama. My goal was to recover the 'language of purity, immediacy and presence' which Diderot discovered in the pantomime, that language of 'cry and gesture' so specific to the stage player that no other player would speak it, not in cinema, television, art performance or any other form of spectacle invented in recent times.

I placed myself in the position of the practitioner of the Romantic period and tried to visualize the unseen in the early Romantic plays, to see beyond the words of long dead poets, the

images that haunted them.

Diderot's reinvention of the pantomime was the main source of inspiration for my methodology to which I added the rhetorical acting model constructed by Johann Jacob Engel. Mostly, though, I had to invent my own tools and test them against unyielding soil; others I borrowed from famous explorers of the Italian tradition such as Dario Fo, Giorgio Strehler, Jean-Louis Barrault, Vsevolod Meyerhold as well as from their Romanian disciples, Liviu Ciulei and David Esrig, much in the way the practitioners of the Romantic age must have borrowed from their predecessors' bag of tricks. And yet another set of tools I borrowed from dancers, from Pina Bausch, especially, but also from the tango dancers I have met and worked with in my earlier career (Noel Strazza and Pablo Pugliese, co-directors of Extempore Danse, Montreal).[42]

In a way, I launched my own Renaissance, and my findings prove already applicable to the newest repertory. If the language I rescued from oblivion is Diderot's language of 'cry and gesture' I could not vouch; but Valerio's prayer for "classical bodies, musical throats and an accommodating religion" has been the device of my quest and will be again should the quest prove tempting once more.

0.6. The moving picture

Classical Bodies, Musical Throats and an Accommodating Religion presents the process of recovery of the gestural codes of the Romantic drama realized through my staging of *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie and, respectively, Leonce *and Lena* by Georg Büchner. (2010-2013).

Following Denis Diderot's model of *peinture en movement,* I divided my present study in five chapters further on called *tableaus*:

Tableau One. Classical Bodies. From Speaking Pictures to Speaking Bodies, an Exercise in Translation explores Diderot's concepts of gesture and *energeaia* in relation to the pictorial representations of the 'eloquent body' characteristic of the Renaissance and, respectively, the Baroque and Rococo periods. Further on I discuss the method of 'illustrating the passions' as exposed in the *Practical Illustrations of the Rhetorical Gesture and Action* by J.J.Engel and Henry Siddons in relation to Denis Diderot's method of 'depicting the soul' (*peindre l'âme*).[43] Practical exercises based on Jean-Francois Lagrenee's *La chaste Susanne et les vieillards,* James Draper's *La toison d'or* and Henri Serrur's *Le suicide d'Ajax* are described at the end of the chapter.

Tableau Two. Musical Throats or The Waltzing Picture examines the concepts of sound and, respectively, music in relation to the pantomime, opera and ballet genres in the early Romanticism with special focus on the Viennese waltz as an example of an 'ecstatic dance' largely practiced over the Romantic period. Further on I will discuss the concept of theatrical 'painting' (*peinture theatrale)* in relation to the notions of pictorial and musical image models.

Tableau Three. An Accommodating Religion. Part 1 describes my method for reconstructing the acting codes of the early Romantic drama based on the *Practical Illustrations of the Rhetorical Gesture and Action* by J.J. Engel and Henry Siddons and various pictorial representations of the 'passions' from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, with descriptions of practical exercises devised for the training of the cast of *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie (2010-2012).

Tableau Four. An Accommodating Religion Part 2 describes my method for

recovering the acting codes of the melodrama based on the actual study of the Viennese waltz in relation with the 'whirling dervish' spiritual practice and my empirical findings gleaned from the actual study of the rhetorical 'energeaia', with examples of practical exercises I devised for the training of the cast in view of staging *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner (2013).

Appendices 1 and 2 constitute the 'graphic' novel of my voyage at the origins of modern drama, with photographic, video and pictorial illustrations of the process of recovery of the acting codes specific to the theatre of the Romanticism.

[1] Theatre and Film Academy at Bucharest. Class 1984.

[2] See "Witchcraft—Hypertext & Performance" (Witchcraft Baillie and Colón Act 1, sc 3) [accessed 25 July 2018] for a detailed description of the project.

[3] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies,* ed. Minou Arjomand and Ramona Mosse (New York: Routledge, 2014), 55.

[4] Fischer-Lichte, *Routledge Introduction to Theatre,* 86.

[5] Ibid, 20.

[6] Ibid, 87.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid, 105-72.

[9] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2007), 17.

[10] Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual,* 17.

[11] Catharine Christof, *Rethinking Religion in the Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[12] Joseph Farrell and Antonio Scuderi, eds., *Dario Fo: Text, Stage and Tradition* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2000).

[13] Dario Fo and Franca Rame, *Manuale Minimo Dell'attore* (Einaudi, 1987).

[14] Fo and Rame, *Manuale Minimo Dell'attore.*

[15] Fausto Nicolini, *Vita Di Arlecchino* (Riccardo Ricciardi, 1958).

[16] The Moretti family 'adopted' Strehler, who became the troupe's official director in 1952.

[17] Dario Fo, *The Tricks of the Trade,* trans. Joe Farrell (London: Methuen, 1991).

[18] Carlo Borromeo, quoted in Fo, *Tricks of the Trade*, 61-62.

[19] Nicolo Barbieri and Ferdinando Taviani, *La Supplica: Discorso Famigliare a Quelli Che Trattano de' comici* (Cue Press, 2015).

[20] "Witchcraft—Hypertext & Performance" <http:/ /resonance.hexagram.ca/witchcraft/#/home> [accessed 25 July 2018].

[21] Carlo Borromeo, quoted in Fo, *Tricks of the Trade*, 61-62.

[22] Robert Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[23] Richard Andrews, *The Commedia Dell'arte of Flaminio Scala: A Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios* (Scarecrow Press, 2008); my translation.

[24] Henke, *Performance and Literature.*

[25] Fo, *Tricks of the Trade.*

[26] Catherine B. Burroughs, "English Romantic Women Writers and Theatre Theory: Joanna Baillie's Prefaces to the Plays on the Passions." In *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837,* ed. Wilson Carol Shiner and Haefner Joel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 274-96.

[27] Frank, Marcie*. Novelistic Form and the Theatrical Repertory from the Restoration to Jane Austen.* Manuscript.

[28] Mary Waters, *British Women Writers and the Profession of Literary Criticism, 1789-1832* (London: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[29] Henke, *Performance and Literature,* 37-47; Georg Fuchs in *Die Revolution des Theaters* (1909) was the first to advocate a re-theatricalization of theatre and he insisted on considering theatre as a specific art form. See Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008), 86.

[30] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (London: Yale University Press, 1995).

[31] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination,* 12.

[32] Fabrizio Fiaschini, *L'"Incessabil Agitazione": Giovan Battista Andreini Tra Professione Teatrale, Cultura Letteraria e Religione* (Giardini editori e stampatori, 2007).

[33] Alice Bragato, "La Drammaturgia Sperimentale di Gio. Battista Andreini, fra Commedia dell'Arte, Poesia e Teatri per Musica," (PhD diss., University of Bologna, 2013).

[34] Fiaschini, *Incessabil Agitazione*.

[35] Bragato, "Drammaturgia Sperimentale".

[36] Jacqueline Waeber, "Pygmalion et J.-J. Rousseau: 'un grand poète, qui serait en même temps un peu musicien'," *Fontes Artis Musicae* 44, no. 1 (1997): 32-41.

[37] Waeber, "Pygmalion et J.-J. Rousseau"; Diderot, Denis, Jules Assézat, and Maurice Tourneux. *Oeuvres complètes de Diderot: revues sur les éditions originales, comprenant ce qui a été publié à diverses époques et les manuscrits inédits, conservés à la Bibliothèque de l'Ermitage. Notices, notes, table analytique, Étude sur Diderot et le mouvement philosophique au XVIIIe siècle*. 1875.

[38] W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[39] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*.

[40] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995).

[41] Georg Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck,* ed. and trans. Victor Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[42] Raimund Hoghe and Ulli Weiss, *Pina Bausch: Histoires de Théâtre Dansé* (L'Arche, 2014).

[43] Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822).

Chapter One

Tableau: Classical Bodies

fig. 2 Edículo de la Musa Villa Borghese, Roma. Photo © Loriana Martin, 2018.

1. Bodies in an exhibition

From speaking pictures to speaking bodies, an exercise in translation

"La Suzanne est placée a gauche sur le devant; on la voit de face. A droite sont les deux vieillards, l'un derrière elle, l'autre a coté. Ils sont bien groupés et leurs têtes sont belles. Celui-ci lui dit du geste qu'ils sont seuls, et loin de tout témoin; l'autre lui caresse l'épaule d'une main. L'expression de la Suzanne est grande et noble. Elle dérobe sa gorge avec un de ses bras; l'autre retient des linges qui descendent et couvrent ses cuisses. Les chairs sont vraies, les séducteurs encore fraiset verts. Avec tout cela, la chasteté de la belle Juive eut été encore mieux avérée s'il n'y en avait eu qu'un et qu'il eut été jeune. Mais ce n'est pas la le conte"[1]

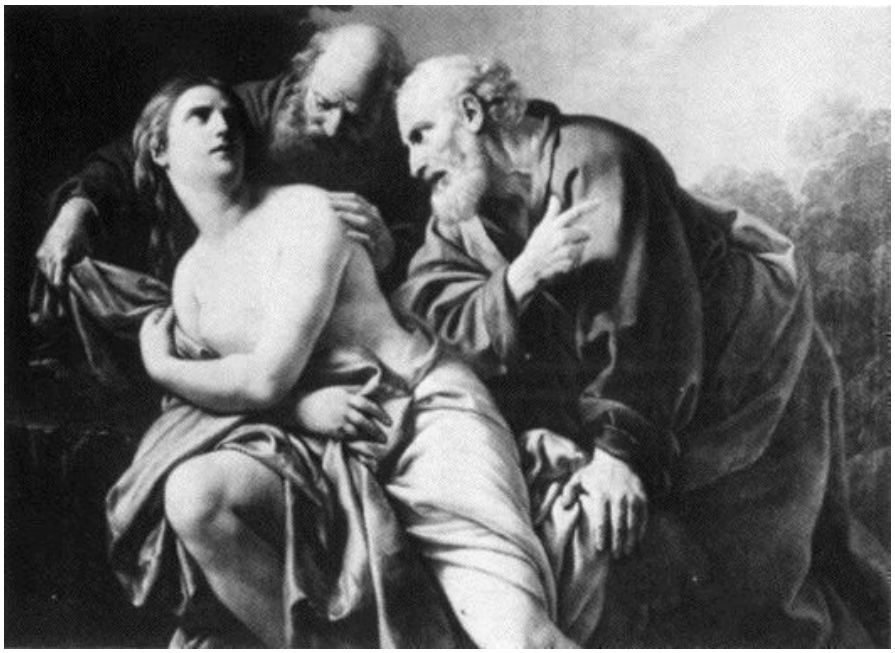


fig. 3 Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée, *Suzanne surprise au bain par les deux viellards,* 1763, painting on canvas. Tampere (Finland), Private collection.

The description above belongs to a series of 'reviews' Diderot writes on special demand from his friend Friedrich Melchior Grimm, director of the *Correspondances Littéraires,* a cultural magazine publicizing the latest art shows at the Academie Royale in Paris between 1761 and 1781.[2] It presents Jean-Francois Lagrenée's *La chaste Suzanne surprise au bain par deux vieillards* to a public of connoisseurs cum potential art-buyers from the enlightened courts of Europe, unable to personally view the work.[3]

The subject matter is drawn from the story of Susanna, a beautiful, God-fearing Jewish woman, wife of a rich man and a mother of four, living in Babylon. One evening, two old men, newly appointed as judges for the Jewish community, surprise her at her private ablutions and, spurred by a sudden desire for her glorious body, try to blackmail her into satisfying their lust.

Susanna refuses to comply, is taken before the judges of the community, falsely accused of adultery by her very tormentors and almost stoned to death. She is saved in extremis by the prophet Daniel who 'retries' the case and proves the falsity of the accusations brought by the two lechers.

Lagrenée's painting features this 'lesser' episode of Daniel's judicial career, the moment of confrontation between Susanna and the two Elders bent on ravishing her, which creates the cause he will subsequently defend in court. It is, in fact, a 'group portrait' composed of three figures: one female, Susanna, and two male, the Judges appointed from among the Elders of the community, with the woman in the nude placed at the centre of the composition.

Neither the motif nor the composition is new; Lagrenée himself produced two other paintings with the same motif, very similar to one another in terms of composition—one of which, viciously criticized by Diderot, was apparently 'retouched' following his suggestions—but then the subject of Susanna kept haunting every generation of painters since its appearance in the

early Renaissance and had become a classic for the representation of female nudity outside the pre-Christian iconography.[4]

If anything, the novelty consists in the way Diderot describes Lagrenée's painting; for beyond the moral portents of the subject and the lavish display of feminine flesh on canvas, which might have resonated with the public's, and the author's, libertine tastes, there is one particular feature of the exhibit Diderot dwells on in his review, which might have stirred the potential buyer's imagination.[5]

I suggest that this feature is movement (motion), in the Aristotelian sense of 'actuality of a potentiality' and, more generally, as 'state of being', and that Diderot's description of *Suzanne et les vieillards* by Jean-Francois Lagrenée (the Elder) illustrates the concept of 'moving picture', *peinture en mouvement,* at the basis of his theatrical aesthetics.[6]

1.1. Bodies in Motion

To come back to *Suzanne et les vieillards*: what makes Lagrenée's painting particularly seductive, in Diderot's view, is the fact that all the characters are represented 'in motion', not in a 'pose' as such but in a 'break' in the chain of action each of them has to perform. Susanna covering herself represents a pause in her running away from the attackers, the Elder taking hold of her arm features a pause in his attack on her person, the other Elder 'pauses' his own attack on the woman's virtue to show her the empty space beyond the garden gates. Nothing is static in this picture for every such 'pause' represents the end as well as the beginning of the action performed by each character, features 'the actuality' of that ongoing process of change

(potentiality) which is the character's life. The gestures concentrate the beginning and the end of an action in one fluid movement in which the limbs of each figure represented in the picture arrange themselves in ‘patterns’ that are familiar to the eye, such as an embrace, a flight, a sleeping position and/or are conventionally associated with abstract notions such as eros, dream, freedom and so on.

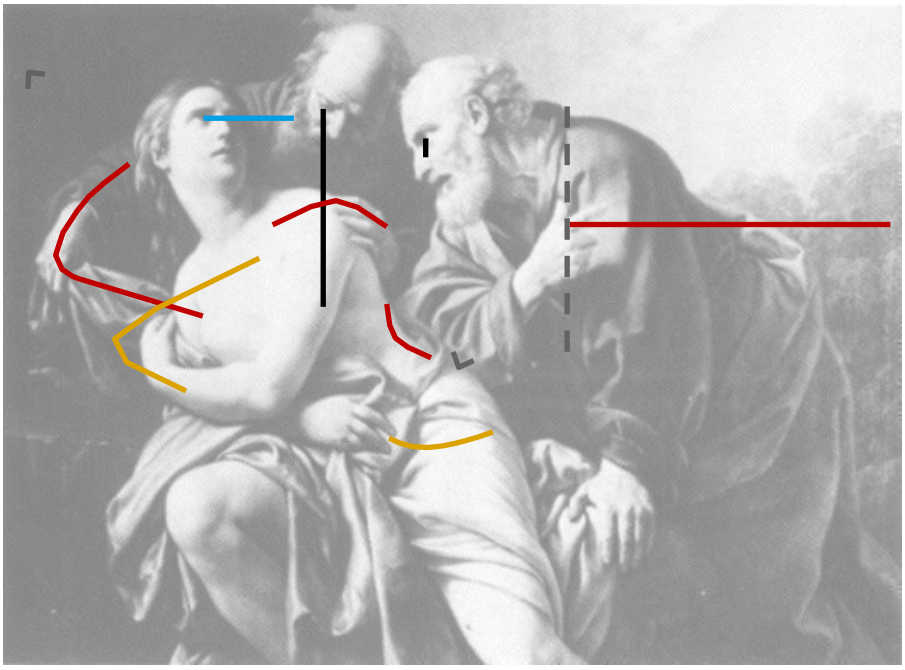


fig. 4 Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée, *Suzanne surprise au bain par les deux viellards,* 1763, painting on canvas. Tampere (Finland), Private collection.

In Lagrenée’s painting, this familiar pattern seems to be the embrace: Susanna embraces her own body to prevent the Elders’ touch, the Elder touching her shoulder initiates a (forced) embrace, the second Elder hesitates between opening and closing his arms around her.

By repeating this pattern, the painter intensifies the eroticism of the picture which Diderot intensifies even more by describing in detail the gestures that recall the pattern, i.e. one arm crossed over her bosom, the other placed across her thighs (for Susanna) or else collating ‘captions’ to gestures that may not appear familiar at a first glance, such as the Second Elder's half-open arms pose to which Diderot attaches a short phrase: “lui dit du geste qu'ils sont seuls”

(literally: “gestures to her that they're alone”) meant to explain the split direction of the arms' movements.

What we have here is a visualization of the Aristotelian idea of ‘motion’(life) as a process in two stages: one, of *energeaia* (to-be-at-work) and the other, *entelechia* (to-be-at-an-end), with the moment of suspension in between (the actuality of a potentiality), rendered in the movements of the three figures in the painting, to which the writer adds ‘captions’, words meant to ensure the correct interpretation of the image.

1.2. Speaking Bodies

These captions may seem redundant since Diderot considers pictorial eloquence as capable to render abstractions as verbal eloquence does. But if we examine the ‘caption’ which describes the gestures of the Elder placed stage right who shows Susanna that there is nobody there to watch their frolic (“lui dit du geste qu'ils sont seuls et que personne les voit”), what we perceive, at first sight, is the fact that the Elder hesitates between two actions: one, to go in the direction his finger points to, and the second, to stay still, the other hand on his chest.

None of these suggest the character’s trying to persuade the woman that they are alone. At best, if we know the story—which Diderot's readers did—we will surmise that the hesitant Elder fears the return of Susanna's maids, and his heart is failing him at the perspective of discovery; if we know nothing of the story, we will probably speculate on his running from some personal foes who might still appear at the gates, see him cowering by the pond, maybe kill him, and everybody else where they stand.

The caption is needed for verbalizing what the bodily eloquence of the depicted figure does not convey, directly, to our senses; it has nothing to do with the idea of motion as an expression of life—in the Aristotelian system, the definitions of 'motion' and 'life' are closely related—but with the many layers of meaningful gesture, as a visual representation of action, concentrates in one single figure of expression.

This is a completely new way to describe figurative painting which relies on the connection between word and image as expressions of the 'invisible' (ideas), a connection many of the contemporary thinkers considered, at least, questionable in view of the 'static' nature of the pictorial 'imitation'. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, for instance, differentiates between poetry (drama included) and painting (the visual arts) in terms of mimesis (imitation of life) and establishes the principles of representation in each art according to their specific object of imitation; bodies are "the peculiar objects of painting", actions "the peculiar subjects of poetry", painting represents 'visible' reality, poetry the 'invisible' and so on.[7] These generic boundaries are evidently fluid, as Lessing admits that actions "cannot exist independently but must always be joined to certain agents" and this means, ultimately, that "in so far as those agents are bodies or are regarded as such, poetry describes also bodies" but the differentiation between direct representation in visual arts and, respectively, representation through 'forms' (indirect) in poetry upholds the visible-invisible tension.[8]

To Diderot, Lessing's principles seemed less than binding; the 'Salons', which were, from the start, addressed to a public that could not experience the paintings directly, used indirect representation to enhance the potentiality of the subject. Lessing's warning as regards the risk of letting painting degenerate (by the use of allegory which is an indirect mode of representation) into a form of "arbitrary writing", such as the pictogram or the hieroglyph only went to prove

that he was right to extend the notion of image beyond the boundaries of a “likeness” of bodies and actions.[9]

The example of hieroglyphs backed up the empiricist theory of the ‘split’ nature of the image: ‘natural’, which results from the activity of the senses, and ‘metaphorical’ which results from the activity of the mind, whose viability he had already verified in his *Lettre sur les aveugles a l’usage de ceux qui voient* and, respectively, *Lettre sur les sourds et muets a l’usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent* ('Letters' to the Blind and, respectively, to the Deaf and Dumb).[10] The use of metaphors permitted him to bridge the apparent chasm between pictorial and poetic imagery ; in this light, we may say that the captions attached by him to the pictorial image (“Suzanne en son bain surprise par deux vieillards”) actualize the potentiality of speech in the bodies displayed on canvas (Suzanne and the Elders) and thus take part in the configuration of the human characters represented in a particular painting.

1.3. The Body as Hieroglyph

The notion of *hieroglyph* merits a thorough examination if only for Diderot's fascination with it, and his insistence on studying them from a purely artistic perspective. Diderot dedicated a special entry to the Egyptian system of writing in the *Encyclopédie des arts et des sciences* in which this type of *écriture en peinture,* picture-writing, was described (by le Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, the author of the entry) as the first method of rendering ideas under figural forms specific to humanity's time of “ignorance”.[11]

Obviously dissatisfied with Jaucourt's definition, Diderot will redefine the hieroglyph as a method of giving 'corporeal' form to ideas, *donner un corps à l'idée,* specific to the times of

man's 'innocence', and a form of writing adapted to the protolanguage of humanity (the language of humanity "in its cradle").[12] His concept of gesture as a bodily expression that pre-dates language stems from the idea of the common origin of painting and writing cherished by the encyclopedists, with the Egyptian hieroglyphic script as the best example of a 'visible code' capable to translate the language of humanity at its origins.

What Jaucourt treats as *conceptions grossières* ('raw' concepts), become in Diderot's vision the first images generated by the human mind based on sensorial input. These images differ from the Lockean 'mental images'/ideas in that sense that they are not referents of words but of other images/reflections the mind stores in view of association with yet another set of images; finally, Diderot suggests, language is a system for retrieving those images. It follows that the first language of humanity is the "universal language" of images that underlies the localized and thus limited languages of human speech, which finds its appropriate medium in picture-writing and, respectively, painting.[13] Jaucourt's entry remains interesting both as an account of the return to the origins of humanity enterprised by the eighteenth-century thinkers, and as a first attempt at the recovery of the hieratic, esoteric aspect of art through the interpretation of the hieroglyphic script. For, beyond the common belief in the esoteric nature of anything Egyptian, the recent discovery of the hieroglyphs proved the existence of a type of thinking that was, primarily, magic but still recognizable as a form of thought by the modern standards of "reason, scientific accuracy, and rhetorical power" and consolidated the empiricist theory of the common origin of word and image.[14] Jaucourt himself toys with the idea when he tries to give an example of a universally understood message conveyed by the 'mysterious' inscription found in the vestibule of an Egyptian temple:

Un enfant, un vieillard, un faucon, un poisson, un cheval marin, servaient à exprimer

cette sentence morale: "Vous tous qui entrez dans le monde et qui en sortez, sachiez que les dieux haissent l'impudence." Ce hiéroglyphe était dans le vestibule d'un temple public; tout le monde le lisait, et l'entendait à merveille.[15]

Further on in the paragraph is dedicated to the use of rhetorical figures in the Egyptian hieroglyphic script:

Ils [les Égyptiens] employèrent la méthode hiéroglyphique de deux façons, ou en mettant la partie pour le tout [synecdoque] ou en substituant une chose qui avait des qualités semblables, à la place d'une autre [métonymie] . . . ces sortes de hiéroglyphes étaient d'usage pour divulguer; presque tout le monde en connaissait la signification dès la tendre enfance.[16]

Diderot pursues the same method when he 'reinvents' the hieroglyph (a notion he applies mostly to poetry but freely extends to painting, sculpture, music and theatre) but bases his reconstruction on previous experiments with the sign language of the deaf-mutes—born out of the 'necessity' to convey information—with the scope of vulgarizing, *pour divulguer,* his scientific results. However basic, these signs revealed to him the fundamentally iconic nature of thought usually obliterated by the linguistic conventions. In his view, imagery is never corrupted by the figures of speech because figurative language is part of the process of configuration that makes the world universally understandable; more importantly, there is a method by which we can translate one type of signs, the iconic, into the other, the verbal, which we can trace in the description of Lagrenée's Susanna by means of captions and titles. In this case, Diderot adds to the sentence describing the Second Elder's action ("celui-ci lui dit [du geste] qu'ils sont seuls") the title of the painting : "La chaste Susanne surprise au bain par deux vieillards" ("The Chaste Susanna Surprised at her Ablutions by Two Old Men").

Even though the title seems inappropriate to Diderot—he remarks that ‘chastity’ is not represented as long as there is no temptation in Lagrenée’s ‘Susanna’, or ‘no young man' (‘*fut-il jeune'*) featuring in the scene—the meaning of the story is conveyed through the 'liveliness' of the characters depicted.

Gesture is also a hieroglyph, in the sense that it transcribes in visual code the notions of *energeaia* and *entelecheia, (*being-at-work and being- at-an-end) with reference to each character’s actions. Since gestures cannot exist outside the bodies that perform them, it follows that the bodies, and the works of art which represent bodies, are comparable to hieroglyphs.

1.4 The Faces of Creation

Diderot has no particular comment to make on Susanna's nudity; yet he remarks that Lagrenée placed her in frontal-left position , *‘à gauche sur le devant’,* and by this token, her naked flesh ought to be the attraction of the show as much for the voyeurs in the picture as for the voyeur 'outside' the frame. Or, Diderot offers as incentives for voyeurism elements that do not necessarily belong to the traditional device used by painters to stir the occasional viewer’s lust, such as a conventional description of the woman's facial expression: ‘*son expression est grande et noble’*, (literally: ‘her expression is grand and noble’) followed by one passing hint at the gesture of covering her breasts and thighs before the intruders’ gaze: *'Elle dérobe sa gorge avec un de ses bras; l'autre retient des linges qui descendent et couvrent ses cuisses'* (literally, 'She covers her breasts with one arm, with the other gathering her bath towel around her thighs').

This rather schematic way to describe the human face reappears in the rendering of the

Elders' heads: 'leurs têtes sont belles', approximately, 'their features are good', and again in the general description of Susanna's features in which the face is not rendered at all: 'les chairs sont vraies', approximately: 'her flesh looks real' (not painted after the conventions set by the Academie) and 'les séducteurs sont frais et verts', ('her breasts pert and young') which is the first and only figure of speech used in describing Susanna's 'seductive' appearance. This 'superficial' treatment of the facial expression appears in his descriptions of other paintings featuring the character of Susanna which he examines comparatively in these figures:

fig. 5 Gavrila Ivanovitch Scorodoumov, engraving of drawing by Carle Van Loo, *La Chaste Suzanne,* 1765-1776, copper engraving. Vienna, The Albertina Museum.

fig. 6 Jean-François de Troy, *Suzanne et les vieillards*, 1721, painting on canvas, 235 x 178 cm. Saint-Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum.

fig. 7 Jacques Bouillard, engraving of drawing by Antoine Borel, *Suzanne au bain*, 1786, copper engraving. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

"*Cette composition de Vanloo est encore une belle chose. De Troye a peint le même sujet . . . On prétend que la Suzanne est académisée; serait-ce qu'en effet son action aurait quelque apprêt, que les mouvements en seraient un peu trop cadencés pour une situation violente ?ou serait-ce plutôt qu'il arrive quelque fois de poser si bien le modèle, que cette position d'étude peut être transportée sur la toile avec succès, quoi qu'on la reconnaisse? S'il y a une action plus violente de la part des vieillards, il peut y avoir aussi une action plus naturelle et plus vraie de la Suzanne.*"[17]

fig. 8 Sébastien Bourdon, *Suzanne et les vieillards*,1635-1671, painting on canvas, 132 x 130 cm. Private collection.

Diderot appreciates Van Loo's composition ('*cette composition est une belle chose'*), comments on the academic (didactic) pose of the model, which the painter seems to have transferred from the studio to the finished work (*'on prétend que Suzanne est academisée'*), finds the reason for this presupposed transfer (it all looks like a response to some other critic's observations) in the 'cadence' or rhythm of the model's movements, only to doubt its efficacy in expressing the violence of the scene: '*ses mouvements seraient trop cadences pour une situation violente'*. The last comments incorporated to the description are: '*son action aurait quelque apprêt'*, (approximately: 'her actions seem stilted'), and a suggestion to enhance the Elders'

violent actions: *'une action plus violente de la part des vieillards'* (approximately, 'a more violent action on behalf of the Elders is recommended'). Faces seem always absent from Diderot's description of the paintings featuring Susanna, as shown in the comparative analysis of works by Italian and French masters from different (historical) periods whose compositional skills he admires:

> *Un peintre italien (Cesari) a composé très ingénieusement ce sujet. Il a placé les deux vieillards du même côté. La Suzanne porte toute sa draperie de ce côté, et pour se dérober aux regards des vieillards, elle se livre entièrement aux yeux du spectateur. Cette composition est très libre, et personne n'en est blessé; c'est que l'intention evidente sauve tout, et que le spectateur n'est jamais du sujet. Depuis que j'ai vu cette Suzanne de Vanloo je ne saurais plus regarder celle de notre ami le baron d'Holbach; elle est pourtant du Bourdon.*[18]

Once more, albeit haunted by the subject and pursuing it from painting to painting, Diderot talks of the composition, 'ingenious' in Cesari's case for allowing a full view of Susanna's body (placed in frontal position with the two men behind her as contreforts) but also 'liberating' for the spectator of the bleak atmosphere of the scene. However, the briefest scrutiny of the above-mentioned paintings shows that the facial expression is worth examining precisely for the academic mode of representation Diderot seems to reject when it comes to analyzing the composition of a picture.

If we compare Susanna's expression in the four representations Diderot discusses, we will see that it changes very little from one painting to the other, regardless of the rendering technique used by each of the painters involved in the comparison.

In Van Loo's version, Susanna's face is upturned, her eyes swimming with tears directed

at the sky above. It is the same pose we find in the de Troy version, with a little change in the angle of the upturn, which Stéphane Lojkine underlines in his comparison between the two paintings.[19] The character's face is half turned towards the sky, eyes completely averted from the Elder she pushes away with her right arm; since Van Loo's picture evokes de Troy's (for Diderot, at least) it may be that one painter 'copied' the other's compositional device as a surety for success at the Salon, which may also explain Diderot's remark on the 'academism' of Van Loo's picture.

In Cesari's version, Susanna's head is represented in the usual, straightforward position one carries one's head in everyday life, with her eyes looking straight at the spectator; it is probably one of the reasons Diderot mentions the 'free' approach to the subject and for the authenticity he ascribes to Susanna's expression (*'plus vraie'*). Finally, in Bourdon's version, which he, assumedly, confuses with Cesari's, Susanna's head is lowered almost to the point where her chin touches her shoulder, which makes her cast down eyes seem almost closed.

If we overlook the fact that some of these paintings come under Diderot's scrutiny under the form of etchings (already treated in a technique that differs from the original) as well as the fact that Diderot 'invents' his object of study more than tries to 'reproduce' it, we can say that:

1) The heads of the four Susannas examined seem to belong to the same woman, as if the four artists had used the same model, whereas each of the four corresponding bodies is different in shape and, most likely, in colour, from the ones represented in the other pictures.

2) Diderot describes the character's movements as reflected in the movements of the cloth covering each body but completely omits to mention the changes in the position of the eyes or the contour of mouths, that is to say, omits to mention the 'little' movements in the characters' faces the painter faithfully captures.

It is an oddity which can be explained if we turn to the academic rules of design elaborated by Charles Le Brun in the previous century, still in use in Diderot's time, which translate the 'movements of the soul' (the passions) into physical movements, observable at the level of the face with every change in the emotional state of the character.

A very simple exercise will suffice to verify my observations; for that, I will choose among Le Brun's sketches four heads which present some physical resemblance to Van Loo's Susanna, then put them in a line and compare them to the four heads in Van Loo's, de Troy's, Cesari's and Bourdon's paintings. As a preamble, I will quote Line Cottegnies' description of Le Brun's design scheme:

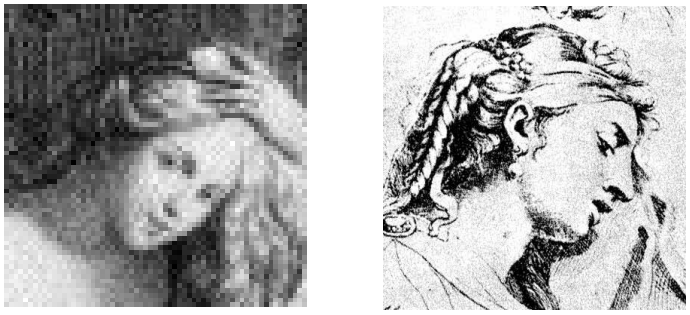
In his *Conférence,* Le Brun defined a universally decipherable code, for, he claimed, it imitated nature – understood as *ideal* nature, i.e. as it ought to be and not as it actually was, according to certain notions of decorum and verisimilitude. His system, therefore, did not have to account for individual peculiarities, nor for any departures from the prescribed norms. His sketches constitute the alphabet of a semiotic of expressions, a language of the body which allows direct access to the meaning it is supposed to manifest or to "mark" – like a written sign –, without any shade of obscurity or any possibility of feigning.[20]

Indeed, if we compare these four faces of Susanna (isolated from the background, Elders' group portrait and general atmosphere of each painting) with those of Le Brun's illustrations that most resemble them, we will see that their uncanny similarity with each other results from the application of Le Brun's design norms to the eventually 'drawn from nature' portraits.

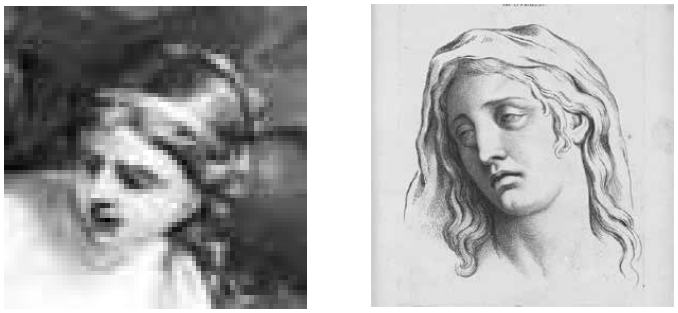
This is all the more obvious if we look at the third sketch which uses a male model, with very little particularities in terms of design to warn the viewer about the departure from the rules of selection by gender (for reasons that will be clarified in the second part of the exercise).

Le Ravissement

La Douleur Physique



L'abattement



La Tristesse

fig. 9 Pictures collage.

It appears that in Le Brun's scheme, a single passion triggers a single physical reaction, regardless of gender or any other particularities of the object of representation, a result which Cottegnies attributes to Le Brun's belief that:

> All passions could be encapsulated in one word, devoid of ambiguity, which exhausted them completely. The assumption was that language (seen rather reductively as a rhetorical code) could encompass the whole of human experience, and consequently, that the latter could be totally known.[21]

The male figure in the third sketch was the only visual representation of 'pain' I could find in the plates attached to Le Brun's 'Illustrations of the passions', which explains my using it arbitrarily for the exercise. It may also stand as an argument for the universality of Le Brun's method, in that sense that the words 'pain' and 'passion' are often interchangeable in the vocabulary of the period and have remained so, to some degree, in modern vocabulary.

Again, according Cottegnies, Le Brun's pictorial system, though hugely successful, was met with some skepticism as well.[22] It was clear to his contemporaries that:

> The underlying objective of Le Brun was to undermine the mystique of ‘je ne sais quoi’, and the aesthetic of grace: by claiming that he could define every single expression both verbally and visually, the famous painter implicitly ruled out ambivalence. By the same token he ignored this mysterious power of art which did not reside, according to Félibien and de Piles, in the strict respect of the rules.[23]

Diderot must have chaffed at the stylistic uniformity practiced by Le Brun's epigones; his idea of 'body eloquence' did not differentiate between eloquence of heads and eloquence of (the 'lower') limbs and this will come out in his essays on theatre. For now, let us say that the human face as a 'chart' of the passions of the mind must have appeared as rigid, contrived, inanimate to Diderot’s eyes and although he seems to admire Garrick's ability to change his 'expression' at a snap, it is very likely that what he admires most is the rapidity with which the famous British actor is capable to change 'masks'. In short, Le Brun's system must have appeared 'logocentric' and thus

devoid of the mystery of the theatrical hieroglyphs whence his lack of interest in the facial expression of Lagrenée's characters.

Interestingly, Diderot never made the connection between masks and hieroglyphs, a connection that is evident to all the theatre practitioners who play with masks; but then he was neither an actor nor a playwright by trade, and his contacts with the stage were yet another kind of 'scientific' experiment in matters of perception, conducted with living, and willing subjects. It is necessary however to discuss this connection if we want to grasp Diderot's concept of gesture as hieroglyph.

fig. 10 Maschere di Chiara Cimmino e Valerio Vittorio Garaffa, Teatro del Disio, Roma Concordia University Montreal-Teatro del Disio Workshop October, Pantalone: Remi Mireault, 2016

The origins of the commedia dell'arte masks are largely unknown. In his history of the Italian Comedy, Pierre-Louis Duchartre suggests that "the mask came into being in early times as the result of man's aspiration to a divine countenance" or, simply, as a result of man's perpetual desire "to astonish or terrify his fellows" by changing the aspect of his face.[24] In both cases, he concludes, "the masks were not mere disguises of the face, but the full expression of a character himself" and "it is the soul, in the Latin sense of *animus*, which stamps the features as surely as the thumb models the lump of clay".[25] Duchartre's views on the birth of the commedia

dell'arte masks may seem outdated ('The Italian Comedy' was first published in 1929) yet, since his book documents the first attempts at reviving the popular theatre in twentieth century France and Italy, and uses stage terminology to describe the phenomenon, I find it most relevant for the discussion.[26] Essentially, what Duchartre points out is that in the commedia dell'arte tradition, the mask takes magical dimensions, and this cancels *a priori* any association between a mask and a particular human face. Moreover, the commedia dell'arte character system works principally with non-verbal signs: gestures, musical enactments, onomatopoeia that put together, constitute a bodily code which subsumes facial expression; outside this code the mask becomes illegible, which is also the case of pictograms or hieroglyphs.

I will quote here Mitchell's example of a Northwest Indian petroglyph representing an eagle that perfectly describes this process of codification:

> The picture of an eagle in Northwest Indian petroglyphs may be a signature of a warrior, an emblem of a tribe, a symbol of courage, or—just a picture of an eagle. The meaning of the picture does not declare itself by a simple and direct reference to the object it depicts. It may depict an idea, a person, a 'sound image' . . . or a thing.[27]

Quite similarly, the mask of Pantalone—I will stay with the representation of the Old Man in Lagrenée's painting so as to avoid digression—may be a signature of an Elder (of the community), the emblem of a social class (the Venetian bankers), a symbol of greed (the moneylender) or just a picture of an old man (with white brows, moustaches or beard). Again, quoting Mitchell:

> In order to know how to read it [the petroglyph], we must know how it speaks. what is proper to say about it and on its behalf . . . If the warrior is an eagle, or 'like' an eagle, or (more likely) if 'Eagle himself' goes to war, and returns to tell about it, we can expect the

picture to be extended. Eagle will no doubt see his enemies from afar and swoop down on them without warning.[28]

Similarly, if Pantalone is a banker or 'like' a banker (a moneylender), and if this banker lends money to a client, then gloats about having ripped him off, we can expect the picture to extend to other complementary actions of the character such as: cheating on his business partners, scheming to acquire a child bride, refusing to pay his servant's wages and so on.

In theatre, all these particular actions compose a 'sublimated' gestural expression which translates into a sequence of actions that ‘stamp’ the character’s features. Pantalone usually walks with his back curved, one arm with the hand closed like a claw in front of him, the other round his back, also clawing at something (anything that might be clawed, really), his big nose sniffing the ground (and under the ladies' skirts as they pass by) and possibly, emitting a crowing sound when shoved away by a male passerby. The mask with its white hair confirms the great age of the man but only as a last touch, for the gestural act (not a pantomime, yet close to it) fully defines the character.

In comparison, the Elders in Lagrenée's picture barely show the characteristics of old age (one of them does not even have white hair) and, more importantly, do not bear other external signs of their profession and status such as judges’ robes, wigs, military insignia, etc. The title of the painting contains some information about the great age of the characters—they are called *'Les Vieillards'*, the Old Men—but their moral transgression is somewhat diminished by the fact that they appear as ordinary (old) men instead of Judges or guardians of public morality. They are, in this sense, less emblematic than both the commedia dell'arte Old Man and the petroglyph of the Eagle which explains the mysterious by default aspect of Diderot’s captions.

15. Eyes wide shut

fig. 11. Robert Dungarren (Jake Zabusky) / Eye of Horus / Eyes of Charles Le Brun.

"An image cannot be seen *as such* without a paradoxical trick of consciousness, an ability to see something as 'there' and 'not there'. . . When a duck responds to a decoy, or when the birds peck at the grapes in the legendary paintings of Zeus, they are not seeing images: they are seeing other ducks, or real grapes—the things themselves, and not images of the things they represent."[29]

I find Mitchell's opening statement to his *Iconology* extremely useful for the understanding of Diderot's interpretation of the concept of 'mental' image and "the way that images in the strict or literal sense (pictures, statues, works of art) are related to notions such as

mental imagery, verbal or literary imagery, and the concept of man as an image and maker of images".[30]

For it is exactly this mystery, this 'trick of consciousness' that Diderot strives to describe in his scientific-epistolary reports on the formation of images in the mind of the Blind and Deaf-Mutes (*Lettre sur les aveugles a l'usage de ceux qui voient'* and "*Lettre sur les sourds et sourds-muets a l'usage de ceux qui entendent et parlent'*, 1749) in a very concrete, (albeit fictional) 'empirical' way that leaves the mystery untouched despite the precision, and the efficiency, of the investigation.

The formation of images is the topic 'à la mode' in the scientific, literary, and art circles of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, the medical experiments on blind subjects presided by Rene Antoine Ferchaut de Reaumur at the Académie Royale des Sciences question the nature of the image, whether it is an 'impression' on the surface of the mind of the 'concrete sensations' obtained from the direct contact with reality, or an 'immanent' presence that structures the reality 'before our eyes' in its own likeness.[31] On the other hand, the ongoing discussion about the art-nature and nature-culture differences which threads through three centuries of description and interpretation of visual art (since Alberti's revolutionary treatise about perspective) is fiercely reactivated by the theories of the body emerging in the post-cartesian era.[32] The concept of mental image which connects all these domains of exploration will have a particular influence on the dramaturgy of the passions and, later on, on the appearance of the melodrama, the two theatrical modes of representation that mark the beginnings of modern drama. Diderot's scientific experiments in the domain of sight are circumscribable to his greater philosophical project of replacing "metaphysical schemes—both theist and deist—with fully naturalist explanations of the universe".[33] They are thought-experiments meant to transcend the simple collection and

classification of data about a certain pathology (blindness, deafness, muteness) and the scientific report presented by Diderot. Diderot himself has no particular interest in ophthalmology—his pique at being denied access to Dr Hillmer's ('the Prussian Quack's') surgical intervention on a patient with cataract is due to Reaumur's questionable attitude towards 'genius', and his account of his scientific query on blindness, the famous *Lettre aux aveugles a l'usage de ceux qui voient* ('Letter to the Blind for the Use of Those who See') completely avoids using medical terms to describe the pathology.[34] What interests Diderot is the way images appear and associate with other images in the mind of the beholder; to this effect, he imagines an entire cast of blind characters whose methods of visualization, thoroughly examined throughout the Letter, will compose a method of visualization of the unseen "for the use of those who see".

Concretely, what Diderot does is 'amputate' the sense of sight on his fictional patients and see if and how the mind will react to this kind of extreme 'surgery'. Then the procedure is repeated in reverse with the eyesight being restored to the patient in view of a comparison between the pre-blindness and, respectively, post-blindness methods of visualization. A third step of the experiment addresses the method of visualization in a character deprived of eyesight from early infancy, whom he models on Nicholas Saunderson (b.1682-d.1739), a blind English mathematician, "fluent in Latin, French and Greek, and accomplished musician, inventor of a palpable arithmetic which also served as a geoboard".[35]

Diderot's conclusion to this first experiment is that the 'inexperienced' eye sees (next to) nothing the first time it exercises its function of seeing, and finds itself unable to master the multitude of sensations that invade it; in time, these sensations fall into some kind of order and, due to the continuous exercising of its power of reflection, the mind forms patterns of association between those impressions and the things that have generated them. In the case of the blind-at-

birth patient, the sense of touch substitutes for sight and confirms the similarity between the object and the impression it leaves on the mind:

> *Il faut donc convenir que nous devons apercevoir dans les objets une infinité de choses que l' enfant ni l' aveugle-né n'y aperçoivent point, quoiqu'elles se peignent également au fond de leurs yeux; que ce n'est pas assez que les objets nous frappent, qu'il faut encore que nous soyons attentifs à leurs impressions ; que par conséquent on ne voit rien la première fois qu'on se sert de ses yeux; qu'on n'est affecté dans les premiers instants de la vision que d'une multitude de sensations confuses qui ne se débrouillent qu' avec le temps et par la réflexion habituelle sur ce qui se passe en nous ; que c'est l' expérience seule qui nous apprend à comparer les sensations avec ce qui les occasionne; ... en un mot, on ne peut douter que le toucher ne serve beaucoup à donner à l'œil une connaissance précise de la conformité de l' objet avec la représentation qu' il en reçoit.* [36]

The mental image resembles thus the everchanging patterns inside a kaleidoscope that are neither geometrical nor figurative, in the literal sense, governed by the laws of association and moved from one shape to the other by a mysterious force Diderot does not name. Or, this is the exact description of the Aristotelian 'phantasma', or image, “a movement resulting from an actual exercise of a power of sense" transcribable as a hieroglyph.[37]

The second experiment, which constitutes the subject of Diderot’s *Lettre aux sourds et muets a l’usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent* ('Letter on the Deaf and Deaf-Mutes for the use of those who hear and speak’), proposes to ‘amputate’ the sense of hearing in view of conducting a comparative study of the 'rhetoric of images' in pictorial and dramatic representation. To this end, Diderot chooses as an object of study the *Muet de convention* (a mute-by-convention) and examines the possibilities of expression of the sign-language in the 'no

words' situation he has created for the examination of his fictional patient.

Based on the results of his 'conventional' enquiry, Diderot will flesh out the concept of 'natural language' as a sign language comparable to the expression of the deaf-mutes, yet endowed with greater expressivity as a result of man's elevation from the 'animal' state, in which communication is merely a means of survival, to that of thinking being. The birth of language is preceded by a state of 'confusion', expressed by a mixture of cries and gestures that could be defined as 'animal language' *("un mélange confus de cris et de gestes, mélange qu'on pourrait appeler du nom de langage animal"*).[38] It evolves in three stages: 1) the infancy stage, in which cries are gradually replaced by words; 2) the formative stage, in which gestures disappear while the vocabulary grows; and 3) the stage of perfection, which sees the birth of poetry/art: *"c'est-a-dire de l'art, qui correspond al' apparition des hiéroglyphes, après celle de l'harmonie"*.[39]

Harmony refers to that clarity of thought which results in clear communication and appears in the formative stage; hieroglyphs 'describe' poetry as the ultimate state of language in which every syllable in the poetic discourse becomes 'vibrant', a state which allows for things to be said and represented at the same time:

> *Il passe alors dans le discours du poète un esprit qui en meut et vivifie toutes les syllabes . . . c'est lui qui fait que les choses sont dites et représentées tout à la fois ... le discours n'est plus seulement un enchainement de termes énergiques qui exposent la pensée avec force et noblesse mais ... c'est encore un tissu d'hiéroglyphes entasses les uns sur les autres qui la peignent.*[40]

Two very unusual facts happen in this description of the genesis of language: one concerns the absence of gesture from the stages of formation and perfection, and the second concerns the method employed by Diderot in conducting the experiment; that is to say, it concerns the fact

that sight, or any other sense, does not seem to substitute for hearing as in the case of the patients in the 'Letter on the Blind'.

The inactivity of the eye makes the connection with painting inoperable and the metaphor of the human soul as a canvas which the 'spirit' paints and re-paints on seems borrowed, and forlorn:

> *Notre âme est un tableau mouvant d'après lequel nous peignons sans cesse: nous employons bien du temps à le rendre avec fidélité ; mais il existe tout entier et tout à la fois : l'esprit ne va pas à pas comptes comme l'expression. L'expression n'exécute qu'à la longue ce que l'œil du peintre embrasse tout d'un coup.*[41]

As Elizabeth Lavezzi remarks, it is the introduction of the hieroglyph in the discourse about the formation of languages that maintains the connection with the language of images Diderot describes in the 'Letter on the Blind' as well as the links between painting and poetry he had established at the end of his voyage through the *Salons*:

> *Dans la LSM, Diderot, qui réfléchit à la peinture, la considère en tant qu'art d'imitation et l'un des beaux-arts, notion récemment élaborée par Batteux et adoptée dans l'Encyclopédie. Les remarques sur la peinture prennent place dans une théorie de la formation de la langue composée de trois stades dont le troisième est celui de la poésie, marquée par l'apparition du hiéroglyphe. En essayant de définir le hiéroglyphe, Diderot évoque un lien subtil qui ne serait pas perçu de tous. Bien que la vue joue un rôle fondamental dans la formation de la langue, elle n'est pas le sens qui émeut le plus : le hiéroglyphe pictural compenserait-il ce déficit?* [42]

The hieroglyph is indeed the point of confluence of the two 'Letters' and, unlike Lavezzi, I think that the subtle linkage ('*le lien subtil'*) between sound and image at the basis of language can be

perceived (‘*perçu de tous’*) or, better said, read in a pictorial hieroglyph (‘*le hiéroglyphe pictural’*).

To do this, I will use Jean-Christophe Rebejkow’s observations on the digression Diderot introduces in the ‘Letter to the Deaf and Dumb’ which centers on the abbe Castel’s optical harpsichord (‘*le clavecin oculaire de l’abbé Castel’*).[43] It is this digression, says Rebejkow, that permits Diderot to imagine his Deaf-Mute’s vision of language in the soundless universe he is confined to and draw the conclusion that the superposition of colour schemes and musical scales demonstrated by Castel’s invention becomes functional only through the mediation of (the letters of) the alphabet: “*Mon sourd s’imagina que ce génie inventeur était sourd et muet aussi ; que son clavecin lui servait à converser avec les autres hommes ; que chaque nuance avait sur le clavier la valeur d’une des lettres de l’alphabet…”*[44]

The lack of aural experience makes the Deaf-Mute ignorant of the difference in nature between sound and colour but not unaware of the fact that each kind of input, visual and/or auditive, leaves its specific ‘impression’ upon the soul; the visual/pictorial and, respectively, the aural/musical language are not interchangeable—as Castel’s optical harpsichord suggests—nor are the letters of the alphabet interchangeable with the musical notes. But translations from one language to the other, without loss of specificity on either part, is possible through the agency of language:

> *L’introduction des lettres de l’alphabet montre que le clavecin oculaire ne réalise pas, dans la Lettre sur les sourds et muets, la simple superposition de la gamme des couleurs à celle des notes [musicales] . . . les lettres de l’alphabet s’insèrent entre ces deux gammes . . . (la présence ou l’absence des lettres de l’alphabet) dévoile la fonction du langage: il ne saurait se confondre avec le langage pictural ou le langage musical, qui*

gardent leur spécificité, mais il peut les agencer.[45]

In a soundless universe, the hieroglyphs, more than the letters of the alphabet, permit the Deaf-Mute to picture the sounds and, implicitly, the words he cannot hear; we cannot say that the sense of hearing has greater power to move one's soul (*est celui qui émeut le plus*) than the sense of sight, as long as the hieroglyph stands proof of the translation between the aural/verbal language and the visual/pictorial expression.

It follows that the poetic language is essentially figurative, a foregone conclusion if we think of the parallel history of the mental/verbal image and, respectively, the figure of the hieroglyph, threading through centuries of rhetorical 'imagery of personification'.[46] What is new in Diderot's treatment of language is his emphasizing the hieratic aspect of the hieroglyph; it is this mysterious, hieratic dimension of the Egyptian hieroglyphs (created by hierophants serving the ancient gods of Egypt) that Diderot proposes to investigate in a context that is equally mysterious, bordering on sacrality even, such as the genesis of language. In this light, everything that Diderot treats as a hieroglyph, especially the theatre, becomes sacred by association; there is a chance, also, that the blind patient in the 'Letter on the Blind' is from the start a personification of the poetic imagination which depicts 'the movements of the soul', carnal eyes shut.

A reconstruction of Diderot's hieroglyph which cultivates the mysterious aspect of writing is done by Stéphane Lojkine, who builds a 'tryptic' representing the genesis of language, composed of three panels arranged chronologically as: Picture no. 1, "The Moment of Silence" (*'le silence, une suspension, un coup d'arrêt'*); Picture no. 2, "The Trajectory", or "The Movement" (*qui organise une trajectoire, un mouvement, un passage du silence à la prise de parole*) ; and Picture no. 3, "The View" (*une image qui retourne et globalise le point de vue*).[47]

The model for the reconstruction is an excerpt from Voltaire's *La Henriade* which

Diderot interprets in pictorial terms:

> *Et des fleuves français les eaux ensanglantées Ne portaient que des morts aux mers épouvantées. Mais qui est-ce qui voit dans la première syllabe de portaient, les eaux gonflées de cadavres, et le cours des fleuves comme suspendu par cette digue? Qui est-ce qui voit la masse des eaux et des cadavres s'affaisser et descendre vers les mers à la seconde syllabe du même mot? L'effroi des mers est montre à tout lecteur dans épouvantées; mais la prononciation emphatique de sa troisième syllabe me découvre encore leur vaste étendue.*[48]

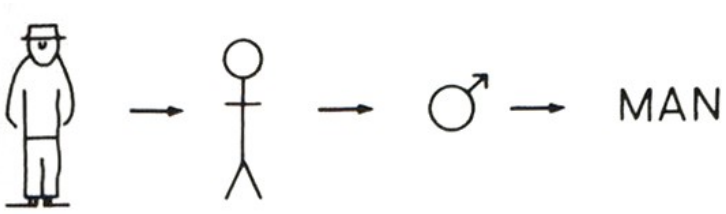
The method employed by Lojkine reflects Diderot's method of transforming verbal imagery into pictorial representations:

> *Diderot distingue donc trois images dans le seul second vers: l'amoncellement des cadavres, puis leur descente, enfin l'étendue de la mer. L'image est en quelque sorte chargée, mise en suspens (« le cours ... comme suspendu »), puis déclenchée, mise en mouvement (« s'affaisser et descendre »), enfin retournée, la mer ouvrant en face de notre regard un autre regard horrifie.*[49]

Lojkine's tryptic constitutes a concrete example, an illustration of what Diderot means by hieroglyph, namely, a *method* (which recalls Jaucourt's definition in the *Encyclopédie*) of 'materializing' the ideas, or mental images, not as words but as another kind of images; the verbal expression is 'absorbed' by the imagery, becomes 'verbal image', identifiable at the level of language with the rhetorical figures and tropes of classic oratory, and re-forms as yet another type of 'material' image which is the ideogram (the hieroglyph).

Another reconstruction, not of a hieroglyph as such, but of the ideogram (the less mystic version of the hieroglyph) as a sign denoting 'verbal image' is done by W.J.T. Mitchell, who

draws a sequence of signs composed of a picture, a pictogram, an ideogram (hieroglyph), and an expression by phonetic signs to depict the word 'Man' :



Picture **Pictogram** **Ideogram** **Phonetic Sign**

fig. 11 From W.J.T. Mitchell, “What is an Image?”, *New Literary History* 15, no. 3 (1984): 517.

He then concludes:

> What the hieroglyph shows is a displacement of the original image (object, impression) by a figure of speech, technically, a synecdoche or metonymy. If we read the circle and arrow as pictures of body and phallus, then the symbol is synecdochic, presenting part for a whole; if we read it as shield and spear, then it is metonymic, substituting associated objects for the thing itself.[50]

In Mitchell's reading, the 'verbal image' *is* the hieroglyph, in the literal sense, “the most literal of all, clearly, in that it denotes written language, the translation of speech into a visible code”, and the way to depict it is to depict a progression from one type of signs to another.[51]

Using Lojkine's example, we can treat Lagrenée’s (1773) 'Susanna' as a hieroglyph which we can read on three planes: 1) “The Moment of Silence”, the 'visible' tableau in which all three characters appear 'suspended' between two types of movements: running and falling down, holding their breath and letting it flow again; 2) “The Trajectory”, the invisible motion by which all three characters release their breaths; and 3) “The View”, the inaudible (dumb) image which includes the visible and invisible movements of the characters, their action and speech.[52]

Knowing the story, we can expand “The View” to include the fountain, with its *putto* in the middle spurting water, symbolizing male potency; the pool, surrounded by bushes symbolizing female arousal; and the deep forest of sensuality surrounding the imminent embrace. The title “Suzanne et les vieillards” functions as a device which enhances the mystery of the scene.[53]

What the characters actually speak of in this painting is left to the imagination of the viewer, or so it appears, for it is possible to 'hear' the dialogue if we know the method by which we can 'translate' visual imagery into speech. Diderot intuits the existence of such a method and tries to shape it based on his interpretation of the gestural expression of *Le Muet de convention,* but the outcome is uncertain for he cannot grasp the exact meaning of each gesture and is unable to check if the order in which the gestures appear in the Mute's 'speech' corresponds to the order in which his thoughts arrange themselves in his mind.

His conclusion seems to be that gestures bring forth the images beneath the words of the poet as shown in the description of Lady Macbeth's 'mute' entrance in Act 5, Scene 2:

> *Je dis à peu près parce qu'il y a des gestes sublimes que toute l'éloquence oratoire ne rendra jamais. Tel est celui de Macbeth dans la tragédie de Shakespeare. La somnambule Macbeth s'avance en silence et les yeux fermes sur la scène, imitant l'action d'une personne qui se lave les mains, comme si les siennes eussent été teintes du sang de son roi qu'elle avait égorgé il y avait plus de vingt ans. Je ne sais rien de si pathétique en discours que le silence et le mouvement des mains de cette femme. Quelle image du remords!*[54]

Indeed, there is no image more powerful than that of Macbeth's mad queen washing away the royal blood she has once spilled in order to change her and her husband's fate. The elements

which compose this image are scattered throughout the dialogue between the Doctor and the Gentlewoman ("Lady in Waiting" in the French version) who examine her bout of sleepwalking:

LE MEDECIN. Vous voyez, elle a les yeux ouverts.

LA DAME. Oui, mais ses sens sont fermés.

LE MEDECIN. Elle se frotte les mains.

LA DAME. Un acte habituel chez elle, avoir l'air de se laver les mains: je l'ai vue continuer de faire ça pendant un quart d'heure.[55]

Then reappear in Lady Macbeth's monologue:

LADY MACBETH. Va-t'en, damnée tache ! va-t'en, je te dis . . . L'enfer est tout noir . . . Quoi, ces mains ne seront jamais propres ? . . . leur est toujours odeur du sang ; tous les parfums de l'Arabie n'infuseraient pas cette petite main.[56]

To finally embrace her entire appearance:

LADY MACBETH. Au lit, au lit…ce qui est fait ne peut être défait : au lit, au lit, au lit.

LE MEDECIN. …des actes non naturels créent des troubles non naturels…Adieu. Bonsoir. Elle a abattu mon esprit, elle a épouvanté ma vue : je pense et n'ose pas parler.

LA DAME. Bonne nuit, bon docteur.[57]

In fact, what Diderot describes is a picture of madness, not remorse, translated into: 1) repetitive gestures of hand-rubbing and hand-washing performed by the main character (Lady Macbeth), and 2) the figures of speech contained in the lines delivered by Lady Macbeth and her two attendants, the Doctor and the Lady in waiting.

In the first phase of the process, the translation from poetic imagery to gesture is accompanied by 'captions' such as: *'elle se frotte les mains', 'elle a l'air de se laver les mains'*

(“she rubs her hands”, “she seems to wash her hands”) attached to the figures of the attendants that name Lady Macbeth's actions. In the second phase, Lady Macbeth translates (her) gestures into speech: ‘*damnée tache!’* (“cursed stain”), *'ces mains seront jamais propres?'* (“will these hands ever be cleansed?”), ‘*ce qui est fait ne peut être défait’* (“what is done cannot be undone”) *'au lit, au lit, au lit'*, (“to bed, to bed, to bed”), which takes her actions at the metaphorical level where *stain* becomes *sin, hand* becomes *deed, wash* becomes *cleansing, bed* becomes *illness* and *sleep* becomes *death.* In the third phase speech and gestures are 'sublimated' into one single caption delivered by the 'good Doctor’: “unnatural causes produce unnatural effects”, which functions as a heraldic device.

It is an example of a theatrical hieroglyph which displays an 'illustrated history of language' with the second phase illustrating the method by which the language of gesture can be translated into speech; but only an 'initiate' can see the mechanism at work in the translation, an actor who knows how to 'improvise without words'—how to make visual imagery generate verbal images and vice versa—and find the words that capture those images.

Any actor trained in the commedia dell’arte tradition, placed in a 'no words' situation like Diderot's *Muet de convention* for example, will easily find the precise gestures which illustrate the idea of madness (e.g. the rubbing of hands over an invisible basin), arrange them into sequences, then repeat them for as long as it takes for the spectator to understand that her 'hand rubbing' means 'washing' a stain. A minimum of three sequences of rubbing gestures is necessary to figure repetitiveness; finally, these gestural sentences will mutate into speech; that is to say, they will break the initial 'no words' convention to establish the new one, in which the word ‘madness’(or its synonyms) can appear explicitly in the dialogue.

Of course, the actor must know *le conte,* the story of the character she is playing, in order

to be able to extract from the actions performed by Lady Macbeth in the course of the events composing *la narration,* the narrative, the ones that express her thinking patterns—circular if thrown off their logical tracks by an *unnatural* cause—and visualize those patterns through the cyclic movement of her hands.

Diderot's method follows the image-word route established by the rhetorical tradition; 'remorse' is as far as he penetrates into the maze of visual symbols displayed by Shakespeare's theatrical hieroglyphs. However, his method of deciphering the mute language of pictures serves to clarify the meaning of other concepts, such as *pantomime*, *tableau mouvant, peinture de l'âme*, which constitute the basis of his new theatrical model.

1.6. Hidden pictures

fig. 13 From Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822).

Diderot describes pantomime as the painting featuring in the mind of the poet at the moment of writing, which the poet wishes to see enacted on stage at every moment of the performance ("*la pantomime est le tableau qui existait dans l'imagination du poète lorsqu'il*

l'écrivait; et qu'il voudrait que la scène montrait à chaque instant lorsqu'on le joue").[58] The primary function of the *tableau* (the enactment of the painting) is that of 'energizing' and 'clarifying' the theatrical discourse ("*donner de l'énergie et de la clarté au discours"*) by means of gesture, pre-verbalized vocal emission (sighs, cries, onomatopoeia) and silence (pose, interrupted movement). Eventually, this gestural code would apply to the spoken scenes in a play as well as to the *tableaux* (scènes muettes/dumb scenes) but it remains specific to the pantomime for its power of visualizing with a maximum of intensity the 'movements of the soul'*('les mouvements dans l'âme'*). We can recognize here the description of a new hieroglyph, a picture which cannot be verbalized despite the sound element included to its configuration andequires a new method of decodification. Diderot seems to think that the gestural code (nonverbal vocal emission included) he prescribes for his pantomime is a constitutive part of the acting rhetoric that needs redemption after centuries of neglect on behalf of the 'speaking' actor; the tone, the gesture, the action, he argues, are means by which the actor strikes our imagination, especially, in the interpretation of the great passions; and it is the actor who pours his energy into the poetic speech in order to stir the passions of the public. *("La voix, le ton, le geste, l'action, voilà ce qui appartient à l'acteur: et c'est ce qui nous frappe, surtout dans le spectacle des grandes passions. C'est l'acteur qui donne au discours tout ce qu'il a d'énergie")*.[59] He leaves the construction of the new gestural expression to the actors and starts to explore the relationship between the pictorial and the theatrical *tableau* from the authorial viewpoint; the gestural code adapted to the new repertory will be constructed by Johann Jacob Engel, a German philosopher, novelist and dramatist, based on the results of the acting workshops he conducted at the Joachimstal gymnasium at Berlin in 1773-1774.[60]

Some clarifications are needed before I start commenting on Engel's theory of 'the

rhetorical gesture and action'; first, I must say that Diderot's concept of pantomime has little, if anything, to do with the traditional genre (the 'dumb' spectacle with musical accompaniment) practiced by the Italian troupes touring in eighteenth-century France. His source of inspiration for pantomime was the 'serious' opera, *l'opera seria* (which he strives to reform together with German composer Christoph Wilibald Gluck and French choreographer Jean Georges Noverre) and, tangentially, the Roman Mime to which he dedicates a special entry in the *Encyclopédie.*[61]

His model for the pantomime is pictorial and has a mystical dimension which comes from its association with the hieroglyph. As Diderot never cared for systems, philosophical or otherwise, not because he was a 'fitful thinker' but, as Jacques Barzun points out, because 'he was a profound inquirer and a fertile maker of hypotheses', his 'speculations (on the origins of the genre) must be taken as indicative, exploratory, rather than literal and conclusive, but often farseeing'.[62]

Taking my cue from Diderot, I will speculate therefore that the language of gesture and sound he invents for his model of pantomime is the language of 'cry and gesture', the protolanguage of humanity he set out to recover through his descent to the origins of language.

1.F. Bodies in a theatre

fig. 14 From Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822).

Another type of experiment conducted in Germany by philosopher J.J. Engel seems to effectively close the gap between "those energetic arts which act successively, and by degrees upon the soul such as song, declamation, pantomime, and … the sensible arts of which the effects are made perceptible on the spot as painting, sculpture, etc." by way of 'illustrations' of gesture and action that apply to both the 'energetic and the 'sensible' representation systems.[63]

Engel builds his rhetoric of gesture and action in terms of the theories of the body developed by the German philosophers who saw the (human) body as "a natural sign of the character and changing mental conditions of the person as well" (unlike their French counterparts, especially Diderot, who understood it "in terms of the emotions as a system of natural signs").[64] As Fischer-Lichte remarks:

> In *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (*Ideas on Mime*, 1785/6) he [Engel] …tries to differentiate and describe different body poses as signs of specific characters…and suggests that 'a head bent down from the neck' is a sign of a 'stupid and lazy' man…[or that] eyes half covered by the lid…feet turned in; hands pushed deep into the pockets…[represents] a soul not wholly awake".[65]

Again, quoting Fischer-Lichte:

> The theatre of the Enlightenment in Germany consequently interpreted and shaped the human body as a sign of the character and feelings of the dramatic figure. The body of the actor is, thus, not presented as sensual nature, but rather as a complex of signs, as a 'text', written in the 'natural language of the soul'. In an ideal situation, while the spectator is reading this text, he will not even acknowledge the body of the actor as sensual nature at all . . . The focus on the 'natural' bodily expression of emotion stands in direct relation to the declared goal of the aesthetics of affective response as celebrated in

> theatre of the middle classes: it should awaken feelings in the spectator and, thus, strengthen the human ability to feel. This was predominantly true of the first, and original feeling of empathy.[66]

This description, however, concerns the language of gesture built on the results obtained by J.J. Engel out of his two years' acting workshop conducted at the Joachimstal College in Berlin (1785-86); unlike Diderot's, Engel's results are thus empirical in the proper sense of the word. In fact, what we use today as a model for Romantic acting, and what I used for reconstructing the language of gesture adapted to the theatre of the passions, is the translation by Henry Siddons of Engel's epistolary treatise on the rhetorical gesture and action, enriched with illustrations of Engel's acting model as applied by the London actors to various roles from both the classical and the new repertory. The foreword to the first edition is worth examining for it presents the Treatise as the result of an extraordinary encounter between a 'Continental' philosopher (Mr. Engel) and a star of the British stage (Mr. Henry Siddons), an encounter which continues to produce results among the theatre practitioners by way of the printed version of their work:

> *The much-approved work of Mr. Henry Siddons', (as it is expressed in the title page)[52], originated with the learned and ingenious Mr. Engel, whose Treatise on Gesture and Theatrical Action in the German language had long been known and deservedly esteemed on the Continent. It may be said, with justice, to contain most luminous views relative to the human passions, and to reduce to scientific principles the ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING. Such a work was obviously a desideratum in the English language; and a translation of M. Engel's Treatise might have been sufficient to supply it, if his principles in the original work had not been peculiarly adapted to the business of the German stage, and his references and examples chiefly taken from the drama of that country*.[67]

The Editor describes Siddons's translation as 'faithful' to Mr. Engel's 'sentiments and opinions' at the same time 'reorganized' and 'enriched' with the observations contained in Mr. Sharpe's ESSAY ON GESTURE' so as to capture the interest of the English public. *"In the present Edition, the plates have been more conveniently arranged, and increased in number; and the Costume of the London Theatres has been illustrated by appropriate passages from some of our more popular dramas."*[68]

This suggests that Henry Siddons' *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action,* "lately delivered before a Philosophical Society, and received with great applause" is the result of a double thought-experiment: one involving students of philosophy and their Master (Engel was a Professor of Philosophy at the Joachimstal College before being appointed as director of the Royal Stage in Berlin) and the other involving professionals of the stage, each group engaging in the study of bodily expressivity.[69] The resemblance with Diderot's experiments seems flagrant all the more so that the final report, the Treatise, comes in epistolary form, except that in the Siddons-Engel case the two theoretical endeavors are effectively rooted in practice, with flesh and blood 'patients' being subjected to various stimulation techniques in view of creating a bodily rhetoric capable to 'stir' the affective response of the public.

It is probably these flesh and blood subjects that give (Siddons's and) Engel's research a concrete, physical dimension which seems absent from Diderot's experiments; still, the text-image relationship developed by the author(s) of the *Practical Illustrations* is very similar to the relation between image and word established by Diderot. This similarity becomes evident when we examine the verbal imagery the *picturesque gesture* makes 'visible' by the method explained in the Engel-Siddons treatise:

To designate the true God, or the Gods of Paganism, the language of gesture intimates

> their residence in heaven, by pointing to the skies. After the same manner, the hands elevated, the eyes directed to the celestial mansions, call the Gods to witness innocence, implore the assistance, and solicit their vengeance.[70]

This generic description of the gesture of *veneration* almost reproduces the description of Susanna's gestural expression in Lagrenée's painting and, if we follow the rest of the demonstration, we find that the visualization principle works much in the same way as Diderot describes it in the *Salons*:

> Would you rather prefer a Synecdoche? (for expressing 'veneration') One points out a single person present, meaning to represent a whole family: we show a sole enemy when we intend to give the idea of a hostile army. Should you like to have an example of the IRONICAL? A young beauty, refusing the hand of a lover she despises, makes him a courtesy down to the ground. The number of allusions, with regard to gestures, will be found equally extensive.[71]

Pantomime, Engel suggests, is the art of *picturesque gestures* which, like painting and sculpture, imitates 'nature' in a direct manner "so very easy to *comprehend,* and yet so extremely difficult to *explain*" and this brings us back to Diderot's notion of hieroglyph.[72] The example of the two 'Italian pantomimes', one featuring *suspicion,* the other *contempt,* illustrated in Plates 1 and 2 is relevant of the tension between direct and indirect, or *allusive,* representation of an idea, or mental image, that particular tension that characterizes the *pantomimical* expression:

> "The *Italian,* who generally converses by gesture in a very animated manner, has (among others) a very expressive one; it is when he means to express his distrust of a man whom he suspects of being false and dissembling . . . He then fixes his eye upon his object, with a side glance, highly expressive of his doubts; one hand is furtively thrust down by his

> side, with a full extension of his arm; [...] the other hand, on the same side, draws down the cheek, that this eye may become more large than the other, which had already seemed less than it naturally was, by the expression of *distrust.* By this means he forms himself a *double profile,* and a countenance of which one part bears no manner of resemblance to its opposite . . . *The second figure* represents another kind of pantomime, frequently resorted to by the Italian, when he wishes to express his contempt of a menace or a warning. He gently draws the back of his hand several times under his chin, and turns back his head with an ironical smile, as if deaf to the speaker, and concentrated in himself.[73]

It is singular, Engel says, that both these pantomimes should be so easy to understand and yet so difficult to explain, and this 'singularity' consists of the fact that the two 'poses' appear almost identical in terms of hand movement, and symmetrical as regards the facial expression whereas the 'feelings' they visualize differ from one another, or better said, cannot translate, literally, as *suspicion* and *contempt.*

> Perhaps the *Italian* wishes to make known, by this gesture, that which the inhabitant of Germany means to insinuate by a particular phrase, the sense of which is, "nothing troubles me". Perhaps too he means to say that he thinks as little of the affair, the other has been making so serious and important, as he does of the dust which the wind happened to have blown on his beard. I candidly own my ignorance of the *precise* or *literal* explication, which is to be given to the above pantomime, a confession I shall be frequently compelled to make, even when very *simple* expressions are the theme, expressions *common* with several distant nations. The more we examine nature, the more matter we find for observation; her secrets are incalculable: the *material* part of them

escapes from our view, and the *intellectual* portion surpasses our penetration.[74]

To paraphrase Mitchell: this could easily be a description of a hieroglyph, in the sense Diderot ascribes to the term, depicting a male figure, 'double' faced, which may represent a variety of 'things' happening in the human mind, such as doubt, indifference, irony, suspicion, contempt, or just a male figure striking a picturesque pose. What would make it into a *precise* rendering of *suspicion,* for example, would be to imagine the action that ends in the particular pose struck by the character in the illustration, in other words, to imagine what the character can, and would do when doubting his own capacity for understanding a situation, or another character's behavior. Going past the *Italian* vs *German* cultural tension—the connotations of a particular gesture may change from one cultural construction to the other—the actions of a man who suspects his interlocutor of some falsehood towards him can be imagined as 'defensive', or 'reactive' to the latter's actions, in which case the character's right hand, "furtively thrust down by his side", reads as a negative response to his false friend's offer to shake hands with him; further on, the left hand, drawing down the cheek so as to 'enlarge the eye' reads as a warning, something along the lines of 'I see you, or I see through you', 'I'll keep watching your every move'.[75] The pose captures the moment of suspension between his refusal to shake hands with his false friend and the intense scrutinizing of the man he now suspects of having betrayed his trust.

By the same method, the figure illustrating *contempt* will read, albeit less easily, as follows: the (young) man's right hand, hanging loosely against his thigh, suggests 'detachment'; the character does not answer, 'as if deaf to the speaker', to his interlocutor's salute. The left hand, placed under his chin, suggests 'withdrawal'—the character looks concentrated in himself—but also the intention to 'spectate', to attend the show his adversary puts on to persuade him to

engage in the dialogue, illustrated by the 'ironical smile' illuminating his face. We are once again faced with a 'double profile' which differs from the double profile in Plate 1 in the sense that one part of the body, its right side, remains inactive while the left side reacts to the actions of the unseen partner. Practically, we are forced to shape the character's actions in relation to the idea of *contempt* the author wishes to express and, at the same time, in relation to the physical 'signs' introduced by the illustrator in his visual rendering of the character; Diderot's method stops working at this point, for these physical signs obscure the metaphorical meaning of the overall picture, or as Engel puts it, make the image "so extremely difficult to *explain*".[76]

1.8. Classical bodies. Preliminary conclusions

With the identification and illustration of the *picturesque gestures* that constitute the visual part of the actor's delivery, the Engel-Siddons treatise quits the sphere of the linguistic games set by Diderot as tools for the recovery of the protolanguage of humanity from its theatrical remnants. The *expressive gestures,* the type of signs the authors identify as constituents of the language of the passions, so many, and so complex that the author(s) feel tempted to classify them in order to facilitate 'disquisition', move the discussion to the realm of classical rhetoric where Diderot's incipient picture-theory of language ceases to operate. As the authors have it:

> Some of these [expressive] gestures are *motive,* or made by *design.* Such are the exterior and voluntary motions by which we know the affections, the desires, the tendencies, and the passions of the souls, which they are the means of satisfying. To this class, for example, belong the *inclination* of the person towards the object which excites our

> interest. The attitude firm and prepared to attack an adversary, when angry-the arms extended in love-thrown back in fear, &c., &c. Other gestures are *imitative* ones, not as painting the object of the thought, but the situations, effects, the modifications of the soul, – and these I define ANALOGOUS GESTURES. These are partly founded on the tendency which the soul has to approximate itself to sensible ideas, and consequently to express itself by the imitative expressions of the form, until they acquire a due degree of *vivacity.*[77]

These analogous gestures "naturally operate upon others, upon the *communication* . . . which there is between the regions of *clear* and *obscure* ideas, which generally direct and modify each other by a reciprocity of action"; walking, for example, illustrates "the series of *obscure* ideas which tacitly direct the will" by means of sequences of steps that follow the progression of a 'situation of the soul' or of an 'interior movement'.[78]

They constitute a secondary visual code based on the concept of image borrowed from the platonic system—internal, organic and living but non-representational, lurking behind the words—followed by another category of gestures, the *physiological,* which the authors themselves describe as kinds of involuntary phenomena that are "really physical effects of interior movements of the mind . . . we only comprehend as signs which nature has affixed by mysterious cords to the secret passions of the soul."[79]

At a first glance, we might interpret the *physiological gestures* as yet another type of visual signs composing the theatrical text; yet it is clear enough that they add nothing to that 'production of images' which we call spectacle. The authors of the *Practical Illustrations* make sure to point out the aleatory presence of these gestures in the acting delivery as they describe, at best, those 'obscure regions' in our mind which the mind cannot represent, and so neither

illustrate nor depict any of the impressions left by reality on our consciousness. They are impossible to arrange in any kind of structure that would obey 'the arbitrary will of the soul' since the 'secret cords' which attach them to the 'secret passions' of the mind cannot be described:

> No one has ever yet explained to us, in a satisfactory manner, why sad and sorrowful ideas operate on the lachrymal glands, or why gay and cheerful ones act upon the diaphragm; why fear and anxiety discolour the cheek, or why shame and modesty tinge it with a deep and sudden crimson … The tears of grief, the paleness of fear, and the blush of shame or modesty are all of this involuntary kind.[80]

We do not even know if these gestures are gestures, in the general sense ascribed to the term; but the *comedian* whose task is to 'imitate' life in all its aspects will have to observe these nebulous modifications of 'nature' in his body, when and if a certain passion will have to be imitated in its minutest details. If a "faithful imitation of those [gestures] that are voluntary" is always possible to accomplish, any attempt at copying the physical manifestations of passion displayed by other players, or by real-life subjects, is bound to fail in view of the impossibility to reproduce the image that has triggered those physical effects.[81] Each actor must create his/her own set of trigger-images which he/she must learn how to reproduce at full intensity and in rapid succession; it is this 'accumulated' energy that gives meaning to these bodily manifestations, perhaps, even, an artistic value, if skillfully used as a synecdoche, the way professional weepers at funerals represent the sorrow of an entire community by shedding a few tears over a freshly open tomb.

Curiously, Engel's experiment, conducted with 'real' bodies and dedicated to the illustration of the various 'corporeal' representations of mental or verbal images, relies more on textual than visual descriptions of the gestures denoting passion; this may echo Lessing's 'first

principles' which make “bodies . . . the peculiar subjects of painting” and “actions . . . the peculiar subjects of poetry” and thus limit his freedom to change the medium when it comes to illustrating dramatic action.[82]

In fact, Engel’s method of representing the passions by means of the *'motions* of the body' does not aim at visualizing the unseen but at embodying it; from this perspective, every single movement made by the actor’s body becomes significant and a code of movement must be created in order to reproduce the painting that exists in the poet’s mind at the time of creation. Quite literally, the actor will embody the verbal imagery in the dialogue, will make poetry become flesh; he or she will not use the language of ‘humanity in its cradle’ to convey this imagery, for poetry, by Diderot’s own admission, appears at the stage of perfection, the ultimate stage in the evolution of articulate languages, or will not use it as a substitute for speech. What will make these embodiments universally understandable will be the patterns of movement the actor will include to his delivery, such as: the ‘inclination’ of the body towards the object of desire, the opening of the arms and wide exposure of the bosom that marks the moments of ‘joy’ and so on.

With these in mind, let us try to draw the image of that ‘classical body’ Valerio prays for. The first image Valerio's line conjures up—before my eyes, at least—is that of an Apollo poised for playing his golden lyra, a personification of (male) beauty cum spirit- of-the-Arts, half hidden in a niche at the Versailles gardens. On second thought, I would exchange it for a happily drunk Bacchus, eventually, an ancient Greek statue recovered from an archaeological site on the Villa Borghese estate. This would be more in line with Büchner's character, whose idea of paradise translates as an endless food, drink and cosmic *lenteur* fantasy. Finally, I would probably settle for my actual choice for the 2013 production of *Leonce and Lena*, in which Valerio appeared as a

modern satyr (a male stripper with a vine leaves' crown hanging askance on his forehead) dancing at Lena's imaginary ‘bridal shower’(Addenda, II); and the mythological-cum-pictorial references could continue until the entire figure of Valerio is revealed as a classical figure, a descendant of Arlecchino for example, recovered in his 'blue' avatar in a Picasso, or in his green coat, in a Chagall painting.

In this I would follow Diderot's method of visiting a *'musée imaginaire'*, his—and now my—private collection of masterpieces and contemporary works where visual memories and actual perusal of visual materials coexist and converse. Or, as Élise Pavy-Guilbert describes it, with reference to André Malraux who coined the term: *“un espace mental, formé par la circulation matérielle des œuvres d'art, qui transitent et peuvent être admirées dans des lieux instables, cabinets et galeries de collectionneurs, ou grâce à des reproductions, par la gravure et le dessin.*” [83] A 'mental space' where Diderot shapes his art theory on basis of the mental images formed by actual contemplation of the works displayed in temporary environments, at the Salon Royal or at private exhibitions, and which constitutes the pool of images wherefrom he extracts his models.

But if Diderot chooses his references among the Renaissance masters in order to draw thematic parallels with modern painters, my choice of models extends to the entire area of the visual arts, classical and modern, with a strong preference for figurative paintings that feature bodies-in-motion (e.g. animal bodies) such as the *Horses Fighting in a Barn* in Eugene Delacroix' *Horses* series, which I would later use for the construction of the sequence of movements composing the *Young Lovers' Embrace* in Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft* (Addenda Part 1) or human bodies such as the bride and groom waltzing to the tune of a goat violinist in Marc Chagall's *The Dance* which would become the central image in my production of Georg

Büchner's *Leonce and Lena* (see Addenda Part 2).

Dance-theatre productions based on patterns of embrace and ecstatic twirling such as *Cafê Müller* and *Kontakthof* by Pina Bausch which I would use as a model for the interrupted and, respectively, deadly embrace in *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie (see Addenda Part 1) as well as the Sarband Ensemble's *Travels from Viennese Waltz Ecstasy to the Mysticism of the Whirling Dervishes in Constantinople* which I would use in the construction of Rosetta's *Dance of Death* scene and, respectively, *The Mystical Wedding of Leonce and Lena* in my production of Büchner's play by the same title (see Addenda Part 2).

With hindsight, I can say that Valerio's notion of the 'classical body' became for me a purely representational figure which I transferred onto each player on my successive casts; an expansion of Diderot's method, really, to the Engel-Siddons figures of expression, which seemed 'outdated' to the contemporary actors and whose patterns of behavior (practically, of movement) were reconstituted on basis of the paintings of James Draper and Henri Serrur which feature the mythological characters of Medea (*La toison d'or)* and, respectively, Ajax (*Le suicide d'Ajax,* Addenda Part 2) at the peak of their 'passion': the sacrifice of Medea's young brother, and, respectively, Ajax's suicide.

fig. 15 From Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822).

fig. 16 From Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822)

fig. 17 From Johann Jakob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action: Adapted to the English Drama, From a Work on the Subject by M. Engel* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822).

[1] Stéphane Lojkine, "De la figure à l'image: l'allegorie dans les 'Salons' de Diderot," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century,* no.7 (2003): 343-370.

[2] Friedrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance Litteraire, Philosophique et Critique Par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal Meister, Etc: Revue Sur Les Textes Originaux, Comprenant Outre Ce Qui a Été Publié à Diverses Époques Les Fragments Supprimés En 1813 Par La Censure* (Garnier frères, 1879).

[3] "The Chaste Suzanne in her Bath, Surprised by Two Old Men", catalogued as no. 32, Salon 1763.

[4] James Hastings, John Alexander Selbie, and Louis Herbert Gray, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 5, (Scribner, 1912).

[5] Geneviève Cammagre and Carole Talon-Hugon, *Diderot, l'expérience de l'art: Salons de 1759, 1761, 1763 et Essais sur la peinture* (Presses Universitaires France, 2007).

[6] Jay Fellows and Herbert H. Lehman, "Diderot, Hawkes and the 'Tableau mouvant de l'ame': From the Motion Pictures of Interior Animation to the Luxury of Still Exterior Projection," *Diderot Studies* no. 18 (1975): 61-79; Marc Sandoz, *Les Lagrenée* (Paris: Editart Les Quatre-Chemins, 1983); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[7] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Ellen Frothingham, *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (Courier Corporation, 2013).

[8] Lessing and Frothingham, *Laocoon,* quoted in W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 101.

[9] W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing's *Laocoon*," *Representations,* no. 6 (1984): 98-115.

[10] Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui Voient* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000); Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds et muets à l'usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000).

[11] Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* vol. 5 (Briasson, 1755).

[12] Diderot and Le Rond D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie.*

[13] Mitchell, *Iconology*, 121.

[14] Mitchell, *Iconology*, 122.

[15] Hieroglyphe Diderot, XIV. Translation: "A child, an old man, a falcon, a fish, a seahorse were used to express the following moral verdict: 'you, who enter or leave this world beware: the gods loathe impudence'. This hieroglyph ornated the façade of a temple: everyone could read and understand it."

[16] Hieroglyphe Diderot, XIV. Translation: "They [the Egyptians] used the hieroglyphs in two manners: as part for the whole [synecdoche], or as a substitute for something endowed with similar qualities, [metonymy]…this type of hieroglyphs served to disseminate [knowledge]; almost everyone knew their meaning from infancy."

[17] Denis Diderot, *Salons,* vol. 4 (Clarendon Press, 1957).

[18] Diderot, *Salons,* vol. 4.

[19] Lojkine, “De la figure à l'image”.

[20] Line Cottegnies, “Codifying the Passions in the Classical Age – a Few Reflections on Charles Le Brun’s Scheme and its Influence in France and in England,” *Études Épistémè,* no. 1 (2002): 144.

[21] Cottegnies, “Codifying the Passions”, 145.

[22] Ibid, 145.

[23] Ibid, 145.

[24] Duchartre, *The Italian Comedy.*

[25] Ibid, 42.

[26] Frédéric Maguet, “Pierre-Louis Duchartre et l’imagerie, la construction d’un discours sur l’image” in *Du Folklore à l’ethnologie,* ed. Denis-Michel Boëll, Jacqueline Christophe, and Régis Meyran (Les Editions de la MSH, 2014), 263-73, http://books.openedition.org/editionsmsh/10098.

[27] Mitchell, *Iconology,* 28.

[28] Ibid, 28.

[29] Ibid, 17.

[30] Ibid, 2.

[31] Andrew Curran, “Diderot’s Revisionism: Enlightenment and Blindness in the ‘Lettres Sur Les Aveugles,’” *Diderot Studies* 28 (2000): 75-93.

[32] Mitchell, *Iconology*.

[33] Curran, “Diderot’s Revisionism”, 75.

[34] Ibid, 80.

[35] J.J. Tattersall, “Nicholas Saunderson: The Blind Lucasian Professor,” *Historia Mathematica* 19, no. 4 (1992): 356-70. doi:10.1016/0315-0860(92)90002-S.

[36] Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles*.

[37] Aristotle, *De Anima,* trans. J.A. Smith, 429a 1-3.

[38] Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds.*

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds.*

[42] Elisabeth Lavezzi, “Remarques Sur La Critique d'art Au XVIIIe Siècle,” *Revue d'histoire Litteraire de La France* 111, no. 2 (2011): 269-82.

[43] Jean-Christophe Rebejkow, “Musique et langage dans la ‘Lettre sur les sourds et muets’ de Diderot,” *Poetica* 29, no. 3/4 (1997): 432-54.

[44] Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds,* 531. Translation: "My Deaf patient imagined the great inventor as being a deaf-mute who used his harpsichord to communicate with other people and that each shade on the keyboard represented a letter of the alphabet."

[45] Rebejkow, "Musique et langage", 440.

[46] Mitchell, *Iconology.*

[47] Stéphane Lojkine, "Le Dialogue et l'image: Essai Sur La Poetique de Diderot Dans Les Années 1760," (PhD diss., Paris 7, 1993).

[48] Stéphane Lojkine, *L'oeil révolté: Les Salons de Diderot* (Jacqueline Chambon, 2007).

[49] Ibid. Translation: "Diderot identifies three images that appear all in the second line of the poem: the pile of corpses, their falling off the cliffs, finally, the immensity of the sea beneath. The image is somewhat charged, suspended (its course… suspended), then set in downfalling motion (collapsing and descending) then reverted again with the sea opening wide before our horrified eyes."

[50] Mitchell, *Iconology,* 137.

[51] Mitchell, *Iconology,* 138.

[52] Marc Sandoz, *Les Lagrenée* (Editart Les Quatre-Chemins, 1983).

[53] Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds.*

[54] Ibid.

[55] Translation: "DOCTOR. You see, her eyes are open. / GENTLEWOMAN. Aye, but their sense is shut. DOCTOR. What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands. / GENTLEWOMAN. It is an accustomed action with her to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour."

[56] Translation: "Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two: why, hell is murky. Here's
the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

[57] Translation: "LADY MACBETH. To bed, to bed! There's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed. / DOCTOR. Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds Do bring unnatural troubles: infected minds To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets: More needs she the divine than the physician. God, God forgive us all! Look after her: …So, good night: my mind she has mated, and amazed my sight. I think but dare not speak. / GENTLEWOMAN. Goodnight, good doctor."

[58] Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres Complètes de Denis Diderot: Revues Sur Les Éditions Originales, Comprenant Ce Qui a Été Publié à Diverses Époques et Les Manuscrits Inédits, Conservés à La Bibliothèque de l'Ermitage* (Forgotten Books, 2018).

[59] Diderot, *Oeuvres Complètes.*

[60] Johann Jakob Engel (1741-1802) - Auteur - Ressources de La Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[61] Reinhard Strohm, "Ritual, Power and Opera Seria," *Early Music* 37, no. 3 (2009): 473-75. www.jstor.org/stable/40390793.

[62] Jacques Barzun, "Diderot as Philosopher," *Diderot Studies* 22 (1986): 17-25. www.jstor.org/stable/40372602

[63] Engel and Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*.

[64] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2002), 169.

[65] Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama,* 169.

[66] Ibid, 169.

[67] Engel and Siddons, *Practical Illustrations.*

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Lessing and Frothingham, *Laocoon.*

[83] Élise Pavy-Guilbert, "Le musée imaginaire de Diderot," *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 1, no. 50 (2015): 15-44.

Chapter Two

Tableau: Musical Throats, Dancing Feet and a Method.

An Exercise in Analogy.

fig. 18 *Witchcraft*. Jake Zabusky. Photo © Tristan Brand, 2011.

2. Une peinture de l'ame

" Ce ne sont pas des mots que je veux remporter du theatre mais des impressions"[1] Il est frappant de constater que Diderot, pour rendre cet aspect, en vient a comparer le poète au compositeur: ' Dans le cantabile, le musicien laisse a un grand chanteur le libre exercice de son gout et de son talent. Le poète en devrait faire autant, quand il connait bien son acteur.[…] Qu'est-ce qui nous affecte dans le spectacle de l'homme anime des grandes passions? Sont-ce les discours? Quelquefois. Mais ce qui émeut toujours ce sont des cris, la voix, le ton, le geste, l'action, voila ce qui appartient a l'acteur' et c'est ce qui nous frappe surtout dans le spectacles des grandes passions". Cepassage s'inscrit dans la rehabilitation des passions menée par Diderot depuis les Pensees philosophiques. Il apporte la un domaine inexploré : "Nous ne savons point jusqu'ou la pantomimepeut influer sur la composition d'un ouvrage dramatique et sur la representation"[2]

fig. 19 Titian, *Venus and the Lute Player*, 1565-70, oil on canvas, 65 x 82.5 in. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

fig. 20 Titian, *Venus and Musician,* c. 1550, oil on canvas, 138 x 222.4 cm. Madrid, The Prado Museum.

This preamble to *Diderot et la pantomime: vers un nouveau genre musical* (Diderot and the Pantomime: towards a new musical genre) by Jean-Christophe Rebejkow, composed almost entirely of quotes from various works by Denis Diderot, is very intriguing, for it appears to concentrate in a few phrases the theatrical project Diderot has developed over his entire career as a philosopher, art critic and dramatist.[3] It starts with Diderot's demand for a theatre of 'impressions' capable to replace the theatre of the word ("ce ne sont pas des mots que je veux emporter du théâtre mais des impressions"), then draws the outline of the project based on the similarities between the theatrical speech and the operatic *cantabile,*("dans le cantabile le musicien laisse à un grand chanteur le libre exercice de son goût et son talent, le poète en devrait faire autant quand il connait son acteur") to, finally, announce the absolute novelty of his concept: a quasi-unknown object—the pantomime—whose impact on playwriting and playacting is yet to be assessed ("Nous ne savons point jusqu'où la pantomime peut influer sur la composition d'un ouvrage dramatique ou sur la représentation") . Of course, Rebejkow's goal is to define Diderot's role in the reformation of the operatic genre, the major project of the musical avant-garde led by Christoph Willibald Gluck but his definition goes beyond the confines of the role of adviser, friend, and critic Diderot played for Gluck and the other members of the French musical avant-garde.[4]

Gluck's reverence towards Diderot's opinions on music may seem surprising since, unlike Rousseau, his fellow encyclopedist, Diderot was not a musician. His musical knowledge came, by his own admission, from his activity as a critic, journalist and occasional librettist, and it is from this perspective, Rebejkow says, that we have to examine his contribution to the renewal of the lyrical genre. The analogy with the Salons beckons, except that Diderot's incursions into the musical world, unlike his pictorial forays, are less easy to trace in the maze of his literary

production. Rebejkow mentions a dramatization of the dispute between ramistes and lullistes (adepts of Jean-Philippe Rameau and Jean-Baptiste Lully) in *Les bijoux indiscrets* (1748)—irrelevant in the satirical context of the novel, where the moralistic message takes over the aesthetic—then hunts down every reference to music in the *Lettre sur les sourds, Le neveu de Rameau,* and *Entretiens sur Le fils naturel* in order to obtain a clear picture of Diderot's musical thought.

His conclusion is that Diderot reinvented pantomime as a musical genre, partly, in reaction to the excessively adorned musical performances given by the Italian *cantanti,* and, partly, as a solution to the crisis of the French neo-classical theatre whose rigid conventions and pompous verbosity alienated modern audiences.

In Diderot's vision, pantomime is the perfect genre where music works as a vehicle for the visual imagery created by the movements of the actors, and voice is used, mostly, to produce the inarticulate sounds that express 'outbursts of passion'. This explains the frequent contradictions in Dorval's plea for a pantomime that would be a quasi-rigorous imitation of nature (similar to painting) and, at the same time, would represent action (similar to poetry, or drama).[5] A pantomime, in short, that would be "a system of signs masquerading as its opposite", a code that would permit the actor to act with some degree of freedom within the musical frame, similar to the freedom allowed to the opera singer in the *cantabile.*

> *DORVAL. Il faut s'occuper fortement de la pantomime … trouver des tableaux.*[6]

And

> *Qu'est-ce qui nous affecte dans le spectacle de l'homme anime de grandes passions? Sont-ce ses discours? Quelquefois. Mais ce qui émeut toujours ce sont des cris ... La voix, le ton, le geste, l'action, voilà; ce qui appartient à l'acteur.*[7]

To substitute pantomime, an art of 'impression', for drama, an art of 'action', to completely replace, if possible, verbal expression by gesture and action becomes an obsession for Dorval (presumably Diderot's alter ego): *"Il faudrait mettre en pantomime tout ce qui se comprend par les yeux, sans avoir besoin de l'interprétation vocale".*[8] And frequently fought off within the same sentence for reasons of intelligibility:*"... de ne parler ou réciter que pour écarter toute ambiguïté, de ne réserver du dialogue que les choses essentielles à sa conduite et a l'intelligence du sujet"*[9]

These contradictions, Rebejkow concludes, 'exported' by Diderot to opera, ballet and pantomime even, the popular genre practiced by the Italian troupes at country fairs and obscure theatre venues all round the French provinces, gave birth to a new musical genre in which 'drama takes precedence over music'. In time, this new genre will be called melodrama and will lay the foundation for the Romantic dramaturgy.

The same kind of contradictions mar Johann Jacob Engel's vision of the pantomime which he endeavours to solve by concentrating on the concrete aspects of the pantomimical representation, more specifically, by trying to understand the vocabulary of the Sicilian mime players (presumably, the direct descendants of the Roman mimes).

His method sheds an unexpected, sharper light on the origins of the problem Diderot tries to solve by his musical 'transgressions'. The problem, says Engel, lies in the near impossibility for the modern spectator to fully understand the language of gesture and action in which the mimes of the Roman Antiquity expressed the 'thoughts, feelings and situations' of the characters they embodied:

> The discovery of a pantomimical language I have urged is a very difficult problem to resolve; the pantomime of the Antiquity certainly had some particular signs... their art

> (the mimes), which they made it a particular, and, probably, a unique study, during the whole course of their lives, to raise on all occasions, the most expressive and most characteristical traits of humans.[10]

It is easier, Engel says, to use the "fecundity of the principle of analogy" and transfer, from the arsenal of classical eloquence, 'models' for representing those changes produced by every "small modification of an affection", or every "admixture of one affection with another", to the arsenal of playacting, for these changes represent nature in the larger 'acceptation' of the word and do not depend so heavily on the social and political background in which the first language was created:[11]

> For example, that *veneration*, when it eases to be a *pure admiration* of moral perfections, and is mingled with *fear* and *sham*e loses the gravity, roundness and equality of tone, *that the respiration, instantly, become difficult* and that the phrases are consequently shorter and less connected.[12]

The "arts of gesture and theatrical action" are thus to be *applied* to the art of recitation, not *substitute* for it, as Diderot proposes, if we want to build a language that is specific to the theatrical representation, but also 'comprehensible' by those who do not know the code.[13] Engel assures the reader that this method was applied at the time of 'inception' (of the pantomime) by the master of ceremonies who 'explained' the subject of the 'mute' performance to the audience gathered to see the show.

fig. 21 Charles Le Brun, *Expressions des passions de l'Ame,* 1732, engraving, 39.1 x 24.8 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The example sends us back to Le Brun's *Illustrations of the passions*, more precisely, to the plate which features 'Admiration' (see above), which we can easily turn into 'Terror' or 'Shame' by introducing minor changes in the aperture of the eyes, the movements of the mouth, the waving of the model's hair. Engel does not name the painter, nor gives the title of the particular drawing he uses as a model for the representation of the particular passion he describes; but he points towards the 'vital principle' that 'animates' (in the Latin sense of *animus)* the features of the character ('stamps the features as surely as the thumb models the lump of clay') and determines the changes in facial expression. This vital principle, or *animus,* can be identified, simply, as *la respiration,* the breathing cycle that 'measures' the vocal emission and gives the movement those same rhythmic variations that 'vivify' the actor's speech.

Desire, for instance, shortens or lengthens the breath, which produces rhythmic variations in the 'gait' even though the character himself is unaware of the cause of his 'predicament':

> The man in this predicament (a violent desire) moves from place to place, from side to side; he turns himself in all possible directions; ... his gait is interrupted and varied into every possible direction ... The wretch tormented by a racking and insupportable idea seeks to deliver himself from it by all manner of dissipations: his gait is as vague and as uncertain as his attitudes…The physiological movements join themselves to these motives and actions without design; that is to say, that all the interior powers of man tend in a certain way to the exterior.[14]

The particular physiological movements appear as signs of the internal physiological processes triggered by desire which join the mental processes in a "synergy of the powers [of man]…a general rousing…for a service which an individual would be capable of performing".[15] This physiological performance, once orchestrated by breathing, can be used as a model for orchestrating the other components of the delivery such as the voice (vocal emission), gesture (gestural enactments), music (musical enactments) and, obviously, speech. It follows that the *energetic* arts which depend on voice, such as song and poetry, will connect with the *ocular* arts, such as pantomime and dance, through the breathing techniques employed to obtain variations of tone, volume, and tempo. This will permit the actor to connect his verbal and non-verbal communications to the visual expression of each particular passion and, ultimately, to music, "in the acceptation as taken by the ancient Greeks" to the word.[16] Acting and, implicitly, theatre, are seen as a primordial artistic expression, "containing many other arts, united since their origin, and which have only been subsequently separated".[17]

Pantomime, as seen in contemporary productions, belongs to those arts initially

"comprehended in the word *music*" which "were for the eye—the art of gesture, the movements of the body, with their lyrical part—to wit, dancing: for the organ of hearing, the arts of declamation, with *its* lyrical part also, which comprehended singing and the accompaniment of music and its instruments."[18]

Apart from Engel's strong criticism of reformists like Gluck and Noverre who experimented with classic pantomime in view of renewing opera and ballet performance, his vision of theatre as originating in music (and by extension in philosophy, which "Socrates, in Plato," calls "*music by excellence*") finds its best "practical illustration" in the new genre of melodrama to which his acting theory fully applies.[19]

The language of gesture the French (probably, Diderot and Rousseau) endeavour to shape may resemble the language of music, but its specificity is yet to be defined and this will not happen without a thorough investigation into the origins of language, Engel concludes. Which is exactly what Diderot will set to do after exhausting the possibilities created by the analogy with music, namely, take up his search for the protolanguage of humanity where he had left it, at the intersection between painting and poetry, direct and indirect systems of representation of 'bodies and actions' (in the 'acceptation' given by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to the generic distinction between visual and aural arts). His findings appear at the end of the 'artificial' route that takes him back to the origins of pantomimical expression via the verbal image, that is to say, by using the rhetorical device Engel employs to refute the thesis of the 'total' expressivity of the sign language used by the mimes of Roman Antiquity.

Interestingly, this route, which both Engel and Diderot seem to ignore, had led in early seventeenth century to the appearance of the *melodramma* or *teatro per musica,* that most curious genre created by Giovan Battista Andreini, *capocomico* of the *Fedeli*. Son of the famous

commedia dell'arte actor-poets Francesco and Isabella Andreini, Giovan Battista continues the family tradition with the obvious ambition to outshine his predecessors in matters of poetic innovation.

He plays Lelio, the Inamorato, (which had been Francesco Andreini's first part with the *Gelosi),* to the highest degree of excellence which permits him to be identified with his character not only on stage, but in his daily life, and invents the *teatro per musica,* the *melodramma,* probably, in response to his mother's, Isabella Andreini's, reinvention of the *pastorale.*

Giovan Battista Andreini defines drama as a "symphony produced by an infinity of instruments", *una sinfonia d'infiniti strumenti*, with the actor-singer as the leading voice of the *concerto.* He works on the premise of the twin birth of rhetoric and theatre, which represents the Renaissance perspective on the nature of both arts, with special focus on the sound component of the acting delivery. What theatre and oratory share, Andreini states, is the musicality of the discourse, which in theatre takes many forms, divisible in two categories: *speech* related, such as the regional accents, dialectal modulations, incantation, chanting, singing; and *movement* related, such as dance and pantomime, which are seen as translations in movement and gesture of the original musical score.

Since both speech and movement are 'manifestations' of the body, it follows that bodies express everything: the internal and external world, the movements of the soul as well as physical movements, the visible and the invisible. There is no ideal form that the actor embodies, no abstract human nature that he depicts; his or her body vibrates like a musical instrument to the tune of the universe and this vibration 'touches' the 'intimate chords' in the spectator, making him vibrate in harmony with the 'instrument'. His theory may reflect the ideas of the libertine thinkers regarding the materiality of the soul and the superiority of sensory cognition over the revelation

of innate truths, which would explain the lack of documentation on Andreini's 'practical illustrations' of those ideas. The secrecy surrounding the creation of 'Love in the Mirror', *Amor nello specchio,* Andreini's most controversial 'erotic' play published in Paris in 1622, seems to prove his affiliation to the libertine circles.

In fact, Andreini's entire repertory shows traces of this new, subversive trend of thought that pervades the intellectual and artistic milieus of the period. The prologue to 'The She-Centaur' *('La Centaura'),* for instance, describes in the allegorical terms characteristic of libertine discourse (not atypical though of the *commedia erudite)* the stages of the cognitive process: intuition, experience, reflection, and the way to acquire knowledge by means of sensual 'awareness'.

In the first scene, Thalia, Muse of Drama, reveals herself to Lelio, the protagonist, not in a dream but in an actual face-to-face encounter. He is present, physically, at the ceremony in which Thalia is endowed with the lyre and tambourine of Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance, which means that the ideal (platonic) forms can be experienced not only intellectually, but also through the senses.

Afterwards, Lelio informs the deities of his intention to undertake a voyage around the world in the company of his lover, Florinda, and visit, successively, the realms of Tragedy, Pastorale and Comedy in search of other equally meaningful experiences. The play follows the couple's progress through the land of Poetry, and their journey ends with the return to Italy, where ‘the best theatre lives’. Theatre and, implicitly, art, stand as an allegory of sensual love; the protagonists’ journey becomes, quickly, a trip to the realm of the senses with sexual allusions cramming the dialogue from beginning to end, and wedded love functions as an allegory of sensual cognition.

Amor nello specchio, Andreini's most unorthodox experiment, premiered at the French court in 1613 with Andreini as Lelio, Virginia Ramponi, his wife, and Virginia Rotari, his current mistress, as Florinda and Lidia. The ensuing scandal and ban on the performance were partly due to the fact that the leading roles were known for living in a *ménage-à-trois* in their daily existence and partly to the fact that the cast 'invited' the audience to partake in the experiences of the central characters. The invitation was conveyed through a series of 'suggestive' movements and sounds made by the actors in front of a giant mirror—the symbol of self-reflection and a major device for producing allegories—placed center stage. This transgressed the system of representation of the commedia dell'arte, *erudita* and *a sogetto,* (improvised on a given scenario) in that sense that it threatened to break the 'illusion' and erase the boundaries between reality and the theatrical convention by the 'bodily' inclusion of the spectator into the scenic act. The performance was suspended and Andreini's experimental theatre started its decline with the successive demise of Virginia Ramponi and Virginia Rotari, the female stars of the *Fedeli,* the practical part of the research coming extinct upon the widowed author's return to Italy.

As mentioned before, Diderot's 'artifice' recalls Andreini's in the sense that it introduces in the chain of pictorial representation a figure of speech, in this case an allegory, which substitutes for the 'sensual body'.

To paraphrase Mitchell, in the chain of representation from thing to mind to word, the original impression of a Body would be displaced by the image of the Satyr, and from here on, every verbal-visual substitution is possible as long as it relates to writing.[20] But then Diderot's purpose is to write pantomime, not act in a mime show, so his bypassing the real, flesh and blood actor, in his way towards the origins of language, is understandable all the more so that, as

Mitchell suggests, "the 'literal' sense of the notion of verbal imagery—the most literal of all, clearly, in that it denotes *written* language, the translation of speech into a visible code" met his obsession with hieroglyphs.[21]

Diderot chooses as a model for his reconstruction of the protolanguage of humanity the Roman pantomime, a form of theatrical performance that used bodily eloquence in the strictest sense, that is to say, with no concession for the spoken action (speech). And if we look at the entry for "pantomime" in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, we can see that the French noun is used in the plural form *pantomimes* and means "a certain type of actor who by the movements (of their bodies), by signs and gestures, and without any recourse to words, expressed (various types of) passions, characters and events":

> *PANTOMIME. (Jeu scénique des Romains) on appelait pantomimes, chez les Romains, des acteurs qui, par des mouvements, des signes, des gestes, et sans s'aider de discours, exprimaient des passions, des caractères, et des évènements.*[22]

It is not the pantomimical performance as such, nor the repertory specific of the mute shows of the Antiquity that are described in this entry but the kind of performers who used their own bodies to create language, a language that can only be imagined as totally expressive since they played all kinds of repertory without uttering one single word:

> *Le nom de pantomime, qui signifie imitateur de toutes choses, fut donne à cette espèce de comédiens, qui jouaient toutes sortes de pièces de théâtre sans rien prononcer ; mais en imitant et expliquant toutes sortes de sujets avec leurs gestes, soit naturels, soit d'institution.*[23]

The word pantomime signifies "imitator of all things", which means that the actor bearing the name of pantomime is a system of representation in himself, an all-poetic body trained to speak

beyond speech from times immemorial until the present day.

> *Je n'entreprendrai point de fixer l'origine des pantomimes; Zozime, Suidas, et plusieurs autres la rapportent au temps d'Auguste, peut-être par la raison que les deux plus fameux pantomimes, Pylade et Bathylle, parurent sous le règne de ce prince, qui aimait passionnément ce genre de spectacle. Je n'ignore pas que les danses des Grecs avaient des mouvements expressifs; mais les Romains furent les premiers qui rendirent par de seuls gestes, le sens d'une fable régulière d'une certaine étendue. Le mime ne s'était jamais fait accompagner que d'une flute; Pylade y ajouta plusieurs instruments, même des voix et des chants, et rendit ainsi les fables régulières. Au bruit d'un chœur compose de musique vocale et instrumentale, il exprimait avec vérité le sens de toutes sortes de poèmes. Il excellait dans la danse tragique, s'occupait même de la comique et de la satyrique, et se distingua dans tous les genres. Bathylle son élève et son rival, n'eut sur Pylade que la prééminence dans les danses comiques.*[24]

Jaucourt's description suggests that the origins of the pantomime may be found in the Greek dithyramb and even though he does not insist in backing up his suggestion, this is tantamount to saying that the Greek pantomime performances were mythical, sacred, orgiastic, unlike the Roman genre which is a kind of entertainment, profane, political, and pleasurable, elevated to the status of art through the excellence of the performers.

The first mime player used one single musical instrument, the flute, for his performance—which once again invites comparisons with the Greek dancers—his more 'refined' descendants from the Augustan period, such as the famous Pylade, adding an orchestra (a number of instruments) and a chorus (voices) to their public performances. These sound plots—Jaucourt calls them 'noises'—created the background for the 'mute' player's actions (the main

plot) which suggests that the pantomime had all the makings of a play, save dialogue.

We can easily substitute the image of the Satyr to that of the Pantomime, and I think that Diderot would have done the same even though there is no trace of this kind of magical *manœuvre* in his writings on pantomime to back my hypothesis. What we know is that he substituted pantomime for the traditional dances (forlane, pastourelle) in *Le devin du village,* a comic opera composed by Rousseau, and fiercely criticized the ballet performances choreographed for the French operas of Lully et Rameau, whose rigid rhetoric of gesture eliminated any possibility of expressing the 'exaltation' (*la demesure)* characteristic of passion that he found in the pantomime.

This means that one of the performance skills displayed by the Greek actors—the circle dance performed by the (male) chorus in homage to Dionysus was part of the dithyramb and had a strong orgiastic feature—did not necessarily meet Diderot's idea of *demesure;* nor did singing, which seems to withdraw from this depiction of the pantomime as he tries to shape the rhetoric of 'noises' (sighs, cries) corresponding to his idea of the 'imitative' sounds necessary to pantomimical expression.

2.1. The dancing feet

> "A waltz was striking up. At this, the women sitting on the sofas along the walls all rose to their feet, one by one, with great alacrity, and their skirts and shawls and head dresses all began to swirl around. They swirled by Frederic so closely that he could see the tiny beads of sweat on their foreheads; and this giddy spinning motion quickened and fell into

> a constant rhythm; he was gripped by a kind of intoxication, and all these equally dazzling women gyrating in front of his eyes, each with her own special fascination, brought other thoughts surging in his mind."[25]

Mentions of the state of trance caused by the Viennese waltz appear in many literary accounts, as well as in the correspondence between prominent artists of the 1830-1850 period. In his autobiography, Richard Wagner recounts his first experience of the waltz 'craze' happening in the summer of 1832 during one of Johann Strauss' concerts at the Strauselsale in Vienna:

> I shall never forget the enthusiasm, bordering on derangement, generated in that extraordinary figure J.S. whenever he played ... And veritable whinnies of pleasure from the audience, indubitably attributable more to his music than to the drinks they had enjoyed, whipped up the ecstasies of this magician of the violin to heights that nearly frightened me.[26]

A similar account appears inan 1833 travel report written by Heinrich Laube for the *Zeitung fur die Elegante Welt*, in which the critic describes an evening at the Sperl dancehall:

> [The music of Johann Strauss Sr.] stirs the young blood like the bite of a tarantula…[Strauss] exorcises the wicked devils from our bodies and he does it with waltzes, which is modern exorcism, and he…captures our senses in a sweet trance…that music stimulates our emotions directly, and not through the channel of thought.[27]

There is no trace of this dance craze in *Witchcraft,* published in 1836, and not a single word about the Viennese waltz in *Leonce and Lena,* created around the same date; but there is a dance of the witches in Act 1, Scene 2 of Joanna Baillie's play, which Grizeld Bane teaches the village wives, and there is one love scene in *Leonce and Lena* which suggests a funereal dance. Some connections can thus be made between the twirling patterns of the waltz and the

mysterious dances in these plays; for instance, the witches' dance in *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie is based in the pattern of twirling at high speed which follows the rhythm of Grizeld Bane's incantations, interrupted by the village simpleton's ditty:

> GRIZELD BANE. To the right, to the right we wheel/Thou heaving earth, free passage give, and our dark prince reveal/ To the left to the left we go/ Ye folding clouds, your curtain rend/and our great master show!
>
> WILKEN. Round, round, pots be round! Meat, meat, for Wilkin! Hurr! Hurr![28]

It brings nausea to the apprenticed witches (suggested by the words 'wheel' and 'heaving earth') and excites Wilkin to the point of making him growl like an animal. There is also a sensation of *demesure*, of sheer abandonment in those twirling women that fascinates and frightens Murray, the outlawed father of Violet, who stumbles on them in the woods surrounding the Dungarren castle.

Another example can be found in Rosetta's dance from *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner (Act 1, Scene 2) which features a couple dance structured as an interrupted embrace. Leonce, Rosetta's lover, repeats this pattern until he is moved to strangle her, which adds *demesure* to the scene.

> ROSETTA. You love me, Leonce?
>
> LEONCE. Why not?
>
> ROSETTA. You love me out of boredom?
>
> LEONCE. I love my boredom in you. Dance Rosetta, dance![29]

The end of the scene features Rosetta, the little rose, dancing away to her grave, her weary feet constantly stepping out of time. This reads as a reversal of the previous state of trance, for the two bodies cease to go one towards the other and are both 'out of time' with respect to the

partner. The image of a sacred dance in three movements—*forward walk*, e*mbrace and twirl*, *backward walk*—is quite explicitly verbalized in Leonce's monologue about the beauty of a dying love and, except for the interruptions in the twirling movement, faithfully recalls the basic choreography of the Viennese waltz.

This twirling pattern and, respectively, the embrace that permit the couple to spiral out of time, appear as constitutive of the state of trance waltz dancers are said to experience. Stendhal, Wagner and Laube, who describe this trance from the position of the spectator, produce a vivid account of the impact the twirling couples in the dance hall make on their imagination. These are late echoes of the upheaval the appearance of the Viennese waltz produced in the sphere of social dances; the French court under the emperor Napoleon (Bonaparte) waltzed through all his military campaigns, from triumph to defeat, and so did the 1830 and 1848 revolutionaries from the first days of liberty to the toppling of the last barricades in the streets of Vienna.

Frenzy, liberation, *demesure,* ecstasy were the terms used (mostly with negative connotations) to describe the phenomenon, which may seem an exaggeration on behalf of the moralists attending these public exhibitions in the cafes, dancing rings, parks and ballrooms across the early nineteenth-century Europe.

But the most surprising analogy was provided by the 'Dervish Waltz', a sacred dance performance given by Konya whirling dervishes at the Ottoman and, respectively, the Viennese Imperial Court in 1830 on music created by Turkish composers after the model of the Viennese waltz. It was a unique experience which united a spiritual practice to a profane entertainment through the similarities between the two types of movement used to induce the state of trance. The experiment was revived in the 2006 project called *Travels from Viennese Waltz Ecstasy to the Mysticism of the Whirling Dervishes in Constantinople*, created by the *Sarband Ensemble* in

Bayreuth in collaboration with a group of Sufi dervishes from Istanbul. The project proposed to examine the Viennese waltz in relation to the ecstatic dances of the Istanbul whirling dervishes, based on the waltzes composed by the Turkish musicians of 1830.[30]

The idea of dance as a spiritual practice appears in the entries for "GESTURE" (author Louis de Cahusac) and "DANCE" (author Louis Jacques Goussier) of Diderot's *Encyclopédie.* Louis de Cahusac defines gesture as one of the first expressions of sentiment nature has bestowed on mankind, and the primary source of what the people of the Antiquity, as well as the modern nations call (the art of) dance:

> *GESTE: mouvement extérieur du corps et du visage; une des premières expressions du sentiment données a l'homme par la nature. Voyez CHANT, VOIX, DANSE. Les sons ont fait naitre le chant, et sont par conséquent la cause première de toutes les espèces de Musique possibles. Voyez CHANT, MUSIQUE. Les gestes ont été de la même manière la source primitive de ce que les anciens et nous avons appelé danse.*[31]

The following paragraph describes DANCE as a series of 'regulated' body movements, jumps, 'measured' paces, performed in accordance to the sounds produced by a musical instrument, or a voice. The non-regulated body movements which appear in a dance performance are the result of the sensual stimulation for, after the pleasure and the pain were engraved in the soul, those movements became their direct expression. Finally, Goussier says, we call this type of expression 'gesture':

> *DANSE: mouvements règles du corps, sauts, et pas mesures, faits au son des instruments ou de la voix. Les sensations ont été d'abord exprimées par les différents mouvements du corps et du visage. Le plaisir et la douleur en se faisant sentir à l'âme, ont donné au corps des mouvements qui peignaient au-dehors ces différentes impressions: c'est ce*

qu'on a nommé geste.[32]

Dance appears when the human body starts to follow the music or moves in certain ways that are suggested by sounds; it is a secondary expression which follows the expression of sentiments, constitutive of the first (primitive) principles of human expressivity.

> *Le corps alors s'est agite, les bras se sont ouverts ou fermes, les pieds ont formé des pas lents ou rapides, les traits du visage ont participé à ces mouvements divers, tout le corps a répondu par des positions, des ébranlements, des attitudes aux sons dont l'oreille était affectée: ainsi le chant qui était l'expression d'un sentiment (Voyez CHANT) a fait développer une seconde expression qui était clans l'homme qu'on a nommé danse. Et voilà ses deux principes primitifs.*[33]

The first dances celebrated Creation—which men were in awe of the gods—and of all forms of dance, the most ancient can be called sacred.

> *Dans les premiers temps où ils sortaient à peine des mains du Créateur, tous les êtres vivants et inanimés étaient pour leurs yeux des signes éclatants de la toute-puissance de l'Être suprême, et des motifs touchants de reconnaissance pour leurs cœurs. Les hommes chantèrent donc d'abord les louanges et les bienfaits de Dieu, et ils dansèrent en les chantant, pour exprimer leur respect et leur gratitude. Ainsi la danse sacrée est de toutes les danses la plus ancienne, et la source dans laquelle on a puise dans la suite toutes les autres.*[34]

The conclusion seems to be that music is the most direct expression of Creation, followed by dance which celebrates it; by way of consequence, social dances are bound to rekindle the (divine) spark of creation in every man and every woman twirling to the sound of music.

2.2. Picturing the method

With these in mind, I will try to describe my own method of penetrating the mystery of those strange plays I chose as examples of the new kind of drama created at the dawn of modernity: *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie and, respectively, *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner. I have already described scenes from each play which recalled the image of a sacred dance as seen by the authors of the *Encyclopédie* (see the Witches' Dance from *Witchcraft* Act 1, Scene 2, and Rosetta's Dance of Death from *Leonce and Lena*, Act 1, Scene 3); what follows is the Allegory of Paradise from *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner which helped me shape my methodology:

Valerio's description of Paradise as the place where, once arrived, we will all recover our original 'classical bodies': 'musical throats' and 'dancing feet' provides a picture of Creation which is the work of a benevolent, or 'accommodating' spirit, one that rejects the rigidity of the figures preceding him. It can read also as a metaphor of imagination, the source of all imagery and, in this sense, it is an image of itself, a 'likeness' of the creative process. If we adopt J.T. Mitchell's description of the Romantic imagination, we will accept that:

> Romantic writers typically assimilate mental, verbal and even pictorial imagery into the mysterious process of 'imagination,' which is typically defined in contrast to the 'mere' recall of mental pictures, the 'mere' description of external scenes, and (in painting) the 'mere' depiction of external visibilia, as opposed to the spirit, feeling, or 'poetry' of the scene.[35]

It follows that the method of deciphering Büchner's representation of Paradise in *Leonce and Lena* might be similar to Diderot's method of reading a hieroglyph. In fact, Leonce's actions throughout the play reproduce almost to the last detail Diderot's experimentations with his

fictional blind and deaf-mute patients, with that particular twist that Leonce puts himself at the centre of the experiment by the gradual obliteration of the external 'visibilia' he sets out to do in Act 1, Scene 2. Leonce says to his attendants:

> Are the shutters all shut? Light the candles! Away with the day! I want night, deep ambrosian night. Set the lights beneath the crystal domes amongst the oleanders, so they glint between the leaves like the flickering eyes of sleeping, dreaming girls. Move the roses over so the wine can bathe their blooms like drops of dew. Music! Where are the violins? Where is Rosetta?[36]

The play is the method, Büchner says, and by extension, an image of the entire process of creating a 'moving picture' with the gestures and actions of the characters as 'practical illustrations' of the method.

My method of reconstruction of the language of cry and gesture, specific of the Romantic drama, follows the trajectory which unites pictorial representation to verbal image by way of gesture. It will devolve in five steps which I will call *movements* to remind the reader of the musical component of the construction.

First movement: Readings of allegoric paintings that personify the passions in terms of gesture followed by a translation in terms of action of the bodily movements of the characters in the chosen paintings. A series of practical exercises inspired by the subject of the paintings will study the functioning of the breath under visual and musical stimulation as well as the way bodily motion responds to sound and musical stimuli.

Second movement: Reading the *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (the Plates) in the Engel-Siddons treatise followed by exercises in gestural improvisation based on the actions of the characters in the paintings. The actors will appropriate the gestures which

illustrate the dominant passion of the character they have to portray and study its insertion into the acting delivery.

Third movement: Connecting gesture and speech, followed by a live reconstruction of the pictorial images previously decoded

Fourth movement: Connecting bodily motion to sound and music followed by a reading of the Viennese waltz choreography in terms of action (invitation, embrace, ecstasy, separation). Practical exercises in couple choreography inspired by the actions of the characters in Romantic comedy.

Fifth movement: Building a 'tableau' by using gesture and sound followed by the building of a dance sequence based on the patterns of the Viennese waltz, which will represent the Stages of Love.

[1] Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres De Théâtre: Avec Un Discours Sur La Poésie Dramatique*, vol. 3, (Marc-Michel Rey Amsterdam, 1772): 249.

[2] Diderot, *Discours Sur La Poésie Dramatique*, quoted in Jean-Christophe Rebejkow, "Diderot et la pantomime: vers un nouveau 'genre' musical," *Francofonia,* no. 19 (1990): 61-73. www.jstor.org/stable/43015768.

[3] Rebejkow, "Diderot et la pantomime".

[4] Patricia Howard, "Christoph Willibald Ritter Von Gluck." In *obo* in Music, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824-0090.xml [accessed 10 February 2019].

[5] Denis Diderot, "Le Neveu de Rameau" in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Europe* (2009): 208.

[6] Translation: "We must concentrate on pantomime, conjure up tableaus."

[7] Diderot, "Le Neveu de Rameau"; Translation: "What moves us in the display of the great passions? The noble speeches? Perhaps. But cries are always moving…Voice, tone, gesture, these are the actor's arms…"; Denis Diderot, "Rameau's Nephew: Second Satyre" in *Rameau's Nephew - Le Neveu de Rameau: A Multi-Media Bilingual Edition*, ed. Marian Hobson (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017): 15–97. All English quotes are taken from this edition.

[8] x; Translation: "All that penetrates the eye belongs to the pantomime, away with vocal displays.

[9] Diderot and Caput, *Discours de la poésie;* Translation: "We ought to speak or recite only to avoid ambiguity, to preserve those parts of the dialogue... that are necessary to understand the subject."

[10] Engel and Siddons, *Practical Illustrations,* 263.

[11] Ibid, 274.

[12] Ibid, 274.

[13] Ibid, 266.

[14] Ibid, 81-82.

[15] Ibid, 95.

[16] Ibid, 263.

[17] Ibid, 263.

[18] Ibid, 263.

[19] Ibid, 264.

[20] Mitchell, *Iconology.*

[21] Mitchell, *Iconology*; Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 3 (Briasson, 1753).

[22] Diderot and Le Rond, *Encyclopédie,* vol. 3.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres Completes de Diderot: Encyclopédie,* vol. 14 (Garnier, 1876).

[25] Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education* (Dover Publications, 2006).

[26] Derek Watson, *Richard Wagner: A Biography* (McGraw-Hill Companies Paperback, 1989): 83.

[27] Heinrich Laube, travel report, 1883, quoted in Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: A Study of Dance-Music Relations in 3/4 Time* (Indiana University Press, 2011): 118.

[28] Joanna Baillie, *Witchcraft*, 1.2.

[29] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

[30] See www.sarband.de

[31] Diderot, *Encyclopédie*.

[32] Diderot and Le Rond, *Encyclopédie,* vol. 3.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Mitchell, *Iconology*, 24.

[36] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

Chapter Three
Tableau: An Accommodating Religion. Part 1.

Practical Illustrations of Cry and Gesture.

fig. 22 *Witchcraft.* Jake Zabusky and Natasha Perry Fagant. Photo © Tristan Brand, 2011.

3. The passion after Joanna Baillie

I became part of the Hexagram three years' research-creation project entitled “Hypertext and Performance: A Resonant Response to Joanna Baillie’s *Witchcraft*” in 2010, at the very beginning of the adventure when everything seemed possible and enthusiasm reigned supreme. The academic goal of the project was to recover forgotten plays by British women playwrights and make them accessible to the undergraduate students of English Letters at Concordia University by way of modern technology. The aesthetic goal was to connect the early modern repertory to the contemporary dramaturgy by means of staging, with *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie and, respectively, ad-hoc written plays (resonant responses) based on the original text as showcases. The results are displayed on the “Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft*—Hypertext and Performance” website where technology and art are finally connected; my own journey ends in Year III with the staging of Witchcraft in full version (co-directed with Louis Patrick Leroux) at the D.B. Clarke theatre, and the present chapter describes, strictly, the practical exercises and thematic workshops I designed for and conducted with three successive groups of acting students at Concordia University over the Years I and II of the project, in preparation for the full production of Joanna Baillie's play. This explains the sudden disappearance of familiar faces from the photographic novel I attach to the present study (see Addenda, Part 1) and the equally sudden appearance of new ones from one chapter to the next; each group brought their own responses to the methodology I was trying to flesh out and the cast in charge of ‘incarnating’ Joanna Baillie's story tested the new acting model in production conditions.

fig. 23 *Witchcraft.* Natasha Perry Fagant and Miriam Cummings. Photo © Tristan Brand, 2011.

This preamble is necessary to understand the ramifications of the project such as the melodrama study in Year II, which gave birth to the musical and dance experimentations

preceding the production of *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner and laid the foundation for the actual recovery of the language of 'cry and gesture' specific of the Romantic drama. With hindsight, I would say that the original scope of the project, namely, to revive a forgotten repertory by creating new texts reflective of the original themes—two short plays, a mini-trilogy, an animation scenario and two film scripts appeared as a result of re-reading *Witchcraft* from a modern day perspective on 'magic', 'mental illness' and 'female condition'—was reoriented by the theatre practitioners involved in the process towards the revival of a form of spectacle, possibly, typical of the melodramatic stage, which the original play never reached. And this is exactly what Joanna Baillie would have hoped for, and what J.J. Engel urged the contemporary artists to explore:

> I would wish to recommend the perusal of this lady's [Joanna Baillie's] excellent dramas to every lady and gentleman of the theatres, desirous to improve themselves in the art which they profess. In this painful state [De Montfort's in *De Montfort: A Tragedy* by Joanna Baillie] the man tormented by his own conscience is the object of self violence; he is fearful and trembling…The answer of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" certainly carries with it an air of effrontery and boldness …If any one had this passage to recite, he would assuredly express with a trembling voice that fear which seeks to mask itself even by its very words.[1]

To come back to my subject: as a professional director, my brief in Year I was to direct two scenes of Joanna Baillie's *Witchcraft*: "Women on the Moor" and "Violet's Garden" (adapted from scenes 2–3 in Act 1) and *The Fingerplay of Katharine Nipsy* (or *Bundles*), a short 'closet' drama by Joanna Donehower, who also signed the adaptation of the *Witchcraft* scenes.

Described by the cast as a 'strange', 'obscure' piece (about three generations of women

living in the midst of a forest with a changeling for a son, waiting for death to come under the form of a Stranger), *The Fingerplay of Katharine Nipsy* was fairly easy to unlock acting-wise once the conventions of puppetry, inspired by the title, were applied (upon the author's permission) to the fable. In this light, Katharine Nipsy appeared as a story about Fate, the great manipulator of human destiny, visualized through all kinds of marionette and puppet play, shadow theatre and even 'naturalistic' scenes played in 'puppet style'. A marionette can do anything, perform every kind of action if manipulated by a good player, so everything became plausible once this specific performance style was endorsed. Crammed in his stroller, legs and arms spilling over the margins of the vehicle, or flailing about like a little baby's, the actor playing the Changeling 'imitated' a marionette abandoned or picked up by the puppeteer, the Grandmother, following the requirements of the plot. Obviously, marionette and player were one, in the literal sense, and the change from marionette to human came smoothly with the baby jumping out of the stroller and starting to march up and down the stage to the beating of drums like a toy soldier. It took a greater effort to conjure up the images 'hidden' in the dialogue of "Women on the Moor", the scene from *Witchcraft* that had inspired *The Fingerplay of Katharine Nipsy*.

The scene features Grizeld Bane, a mad woman wandering the woods around the castle of Dungarren in search of Satan, the King of Hell, who holds the power to resurrect her husband, a highway man hanged for his crimes. Grizeld's followers are three village women who wish to serve Satan in order to escape poverty, one of which, Mary Macmurren, has brought her son Wilkin, a 'simpleton', to be cured by the Black Lord. The ceremony conducted by Grizeld Bane in a clearing (where Satan is known to appear before his subjects) is interrupted by Murray, an outlaw in hiding come to a secret meeting with his daughter, Violet, an innocent girl in love with

Robert Dungarren, the master of the Dungarren estate.

For fear of being recognized, Murray poses as Satan and promises to satisfy the women's wishes provided that they leave the place; he gets rid of them before Violet's arrival and the scene ends with their heartrending separation, witnessed from the shadows by Rutherford, the local vicar, who rushes to the castle to give succour to Lady Dungarren's little daughter, afflicted by a strange illness.

"Violet's Garden", the next scene, features Robert Dungarren rattled by Rutherford's news about Violet's secret tryst with the man in the woods, rushing to confront the traitress. Unaware of his torment, Violet meets him with open arms which further enrages Dungarren; he accuses Violet of being deceitful and the scene turns to a classic lovers' tiff as Violet refuses to reveal the identity of the 'other' man and demands that Robert believe, unconditionally, in her love of him. Finally, Dungarren gives up the fight, promises to curb his jealousy, and the lovers reconcile amidst the scented flowers in Violet's garden.

In terms of action, "Women on the Moor" centers on the secret ceremony conducted by Grizeld Bane in honor of Satan, which Murray inadvertently interrupts. The women dance in a circle to Grizeld Bane's incantation, which the simpleton, Wilkin, frequently interrupts with his groans, cries and requests for food.

After the women's exit, Murray meets with his daughter, carries her in his arms over the stream, then repeatedly rejects and accepts her embrace as he battles with his conscience over disappearing from her life, or risking Violet's freedom for his own convenience.

Their secret meeting is revealed to the vicar who seeks shelter from the storm; these repeated interruptions break the atmosphere of mystery installed by the stormy night, the witch's incantation and the powerful love that links father and daughter, to the point where the

characters' passions, whichever they might be, drown in ridicule, save for Grizeld Bane's love for her dead husband, which remains magnified until her suicide in Act 5.

"Violet's Garden" is built on a similar structure: the circle of the lovers' embrace is broken by one or the other of the protagonists, rebuilt and broken again with the mounting rage in their bosoms, which makes the characters resemble a couple of bulls locking horns in an arena.

All in all, there is enough movement in both tableaus to illustrate a saraband of passions in every particular moment of their individual progression, and enough actions and situations which reveal the different stages of the progression to satisfy the requirements set by Baillie herself for the representation of 'strong but delicate' passions such as love, in the comic genre. But the dialogue appears static, reflective, perhaps, of the internal picture-in-motion it sets out to reveal as shown in the opening of "Violet's Garden", the first love scene of the play:

> VIOLET. Oh, Robert, Robert! What mean those tossings of the arms—those gestures of distraction? You doubt my faith, you think me unworthy, and it moves you to this fearful degree … *(bursting into tears)*
>
> DUNGARREN. *(catching her in his arms, then unclasping her suddenly and dropping on his knee)* O, forgive me, forgive me! I have treated thee ungenerously and unjustly: forgive me, my own sweet girl![2]

The gesture doubles for words, one character describes the other character's gestures, 'explains' those gestures to the public who, it is supposed, have eyes and can see it all for themselves, which makes redundancy, not repetitiveness, the dominant feature of the entire scene.

And the examples can continue; what is more important is that, despite these cumbersome rhetorical devices Baillie borrows pell-mell from traditional comedy (which she

formally rejects in her *Introductory Discourse* for its 'superficial' treatment of the weaknesses 'inherent' to human nature) the image of the mind as a moving picture can be seen, precisely, in Baillie's abuse of rhetorical device in matters of soliloquy.

Dungarren's soliloquy in "Violet's Garden" starts with a detailed description of the set already described in the stage directions as "a flower garden by the cottage of VIOLET MURREY, with the building partly occupying the bottom of the stage, and partly concealed", which enumerates the particular species of flowers growing in the said garden, associates them with specific feminine features, then transfers those features to Violet by way of yet another description of the species he has brought her as a gift upon his return from a trip to the 'south country':

> DUNGARREN. The lily, and the rose, and the gillyflower; things the most beautiful in nature, planted and cherished by a hand as fair and as delicate as themselves! Innocence and purity should live here; ay, and do live here…*(Looking again on the flowers as he proceeds towards the house.)* Pretty pansy! thou hast been well tended since I brought you from the south country with thy pretty friend, the carnation by thy side. Ay, and ye are companions still; thou, too, hast been well cared for, and all thy swelling buds will open to the sun ere long.[3]

This piling of images of flowers in different stages of growing does not aim at describing the stagecraft necessary to the realization of the scene (the cottage, for instance, does not appear at all in the description) but functions as an allegory of love, with Violet as a personification of the passion growing in Dungarren's heart, and an entire symbolic of sexual desire circumscribed to her gestures of tending the garden.

Quite literally, the pansy and carnation seeds Dungarren brings from the 'nether regions'

(the South is a classic metaphor for the lower parts of the body) grown/'swollen' under Violet's loving ministrations are now ready to burst/“open to the sun”.[4] This explains his jealous fit and all the exaggerations/tossings of the arms, etc. that make him look temporarily insane, and perfectly ridiculous at the same time.

By Engel's admission, love is an “admixed” passion which combines “grace and delicacy of feeling” with “extreme agitation” and whether Baillie refrains, for reasons of decorum, from inserting gestures that express agitation, or “basic instincts” unleashed into a nobleman's behaviour (in the *Introductory Discourse* she states that “rough expressions” belong to the uneducated classes) or prefers to depict other traits of this “admixed” passion, is irrelevant for the present discussion.[5]

The gilded language she uses to describe Dungarren's passion for Violet reveals her pictorial vision about drama and this can be used to build our own image of the character. In truth, Violet's name became meaningful to me only after trying to convince the actor playing Dungarren that he had to recite all the flowers mentioned in the soliloquy for the public to understand how a fragile but powerfully scented flower, like the violet, impresses him more than the lily, etc. What really convinced him of the necessity to utter all the names of the flowers in the opening line of the soliloquy (he always left out the gillyflower and never remembered the order in which those names appeared in the text) was seeing a reproduction of Millais’ *Ophelia* I myself had recovered from my ‘imaginary museum’.

fig. 24 Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia,* 1851-52, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 111.8 cm. London, Tate Britain.

Better said, it was a detail of the painting that opened his eyes—the image of Ophelia's hand still holding the flowers gathered before dying, among which we can see crimsons and violets (the red anemone symbolizing Adonis/Acis' death at the hands of Ares would trigger another set of images later to be used in the "Execution" scene). Violet Murray suddenly identified with every scented flower in her garden, which she tends with her own hands (white as lilies, soft as petals, etc.), her scent increasing Dungarren's 'madness' as she innocently tried to embrace him.

In the final version, Dungarren would actually begin the scene by sniffing "the lily, and the rose, and the gillyflower" (translatable as: "white skin, red cheeks, blue eyes") then, fully aroused, started to sniff Violet's hair, neck, and bosom until she pushed him away, wondering about his sanity.[6]

'Sniffing' became the main gesture of love for Dungarren, and tossing her (long) hair to hide her face became Violet's gesture of innocence; the comic overtones of the scene were thus amplified in a 'natural' manner, and perfectly justified staging the lovers' reconciliation as a classic *lazzi*. (*Lazzi*: Violet trips on a root, falls on her back, drags Dungarren on top of her. They kiss and she almost faints, which turns her last words—"I am in need of repose"—into a punchline).

The entire scene was suffused with an (erotic) energy that came directly from the paintings and sculptures we drew upon to compose the gestural expression (Antonio Canova's *Eros and Psyche* provided the model for the 'embrace').

But it was all due to a 'leap of faith', to my belief in the power of pictures to 'strike upon our senses' indiscriminately, regardless of personal taste, knowledge about painting, artistic experience and so on.

However, the cast of "Women on the Moor" (except for the actress playing Violet) was less stimulated by Goya's *Sabbath* (and indeed by any other etching or print featuring witches brought to trial and execution from various periods included in the bibliography) than by the samples of traditional music and dance I kept testing throughout the first part of the rehearsal process.

One of those examples was the Romanian traditional dance of the harvest called *Ciuleandra* ("The Thistle"), a circle dance which imitates the thrashing of wheat. It did energize the witches, but the energy wore off during the dialogue between Murray and Grizeld Bane; and when it did not, the noise of the steps and the excited cries of the dancers drowned Wilkin's 'noises'.

Eventually, an intermediary solution was found based in Baillie's stage directions: the women walked in a circle to the rhythm of Grizeld Bane's incantation, 'freezing' in various poses with every thunderclap, with Wilkin, the simpleton, leaping and running outside the circle, always, in the 'wrong' direction/the opposite in relation to the group:

> GRIZELD. To the right, to the right, to the right we wheel; Thou heaving earth,
>
> free passage give, and our dark prince reveal. To the right, &c. *(Three times, then turning the contrary way:)* To the left, to the left, to the left we go; Ye folding clouds,

your curtain rend, and our great master show. *(Loud thunder.)*[7]

The circular movement did produce a hypnotic effect, but it was a mere optical trick which I gave up in the next stages of the rehearsal process.

The results of this experience were nevertheless stimulating: the comic turn given to the performance kindled the interest of the experts in Romanticism and made the general public—who, admittedly, did not understand half of the dialogue delivered in the original Scottish dialect of the eighteenth century, painstakingly acquired by the actors through endless hours of coaching by an expert dialectician—claim that they had understood the 'story' from the way the actors 'behaved'.

For me, the journey was merely beginning. I was convinced that, in spite of my relative failure to decipher it, some sort of gestural language specific to the expression of the passions (as Baillie understood it) was encrypted in *Witchcraft.* What I needed to do was to build my own method of decoding based on the practical results obtained in Year I, but also on the reorientation of my theoretical research towards the domain of melodrama. In other words, I felt the need to draw my inspiration from outside the sphere of psychological, medical, social sciences where modern critics and historians (and Baillie, for that matter) often draw theirs. As Joseph Roach remarks (and I concur):

> The languages describing actors in different periods all employed scientific or crypto-scientific terminology to ratify the 'naturalness' of gestures and expressions. This meant expanding the boundaries of what counted as evidence in theatre history to include numerous episodes from the history of science, for there seemed to be no one 'scientific language' standing apart from history as steadily accreting repository of Positive Truth, but rather many discontinuous languages, as diverse and often as sloppy as others

describing the stage.[8]

A brief review of Joanna Baillie's *Introductory Discourse to the Plays on the Stronger Passions* will show the difficulty of the endeavour. The *Introductory Discourse* which Joanna Baillie published anonymously as a 'Preface' to the 1798 edition of her *Plays on the Stronger Passions* describes her 'dramaturgical plan' in a motley of scientific jargons that obscure her theory to the point of obliteration.

The notion of *sympathetick curiosity*, central to her theory of theatre, wanders from one discipline to the other, from anthropology to history to politics to psychology in search of a definition to ultimately become a "propensity within us", a bent for watching the sufferings and sometimes joys of others, a propensity that exists in the "savage" as well as the "civilized" populations around the world: "How sensible are we of this strong propensity within us, when we behold any person under the pressure of great and uncommon calamity!"[9] But, says Baillie:

> It is not in situations of difficulty and distress alone [public executions, sacrificing prisoners of war, encounters with spirits, etc.] that man becomes the object of this sympathetic curiosity; he is no less so when the evil he contends with arises in his own breast, and no outward circumstance connected with him either awakens our attention or our pity. What human creature is there, who can behold a being like himself under the violent agitation of those passions which all have, in some degree, experienced, without feeling himself most powerfully excited by the sight?[10]

Concretely, Baillie's concept of "sympathetick curiosity" is equated with 'voyeurism', and the spectacle of passion is the best occasion for voyeuristic experiences to take place; this, in some sense, echoes Diderot's concept of 'absorption'/abandonment (caused by a powerful image).

I am oversimplifying, of course, but since Baillie claims that her (new) dramaturgy of

'the passions' faithfully illustrates her (new) theory of drama, *The Introductory Discourse* is the primary source for whoever wants to understand her system; and this, obviously, requires clear definitions of the main concepts. This is very difficult to manage based on her *Discourse*: the description of anger, for instance, is at best sketchy: all we can extract from it is a set of observations on the physical transformations caused by this passion glossed over as "unpleasing and distorted features" that denote the (angry) man's mental state.[11] The rest of the paragraph describes the almost prurient interest his appearance is bound to stir in the unsympathetic crowd:

> Anger is a passion that attracts less sympathy than any other, yet the unpleasing and distorted features of an angry man will be more eagerly gazed upon by those wo are in no wise concerned with his fury, or the objects of it, than the most amiable, placid countenance in the world. Every eye is directed to him; every voice hushed to silence in its presence; even children will leave off their gambols as he passes, and gaze after him more eagerly than the gaudiest equipage. The wild tossings of despair: the gnashing of hatred and revenge; the yearnings of affection, and the softened mien of love; all the language of the agitated soul, which every age and nation understand, is never addressed to the dull or inattentive.[12]

It follows that the spectacle of passion does not unfold on stage, but in the spectators' area and it is the "delineation" of the "sympathetick curiosity" in the audience's soul that Baillie wishes to illustrate in her plays.[13] This was a most unsettling conclusion which I found expressed, albeit convolutedly, in James Cox's interpretation of *Witchcraft:*

> *Witchcraft* demonstrates how Baillie would like spectacle to function within her plays. There is no doubt the play is driven by spectacle. In addition to various scenes around the impressive Tower of Dungarren and [*striking natural settings*]—such as Act III, scene i,

> where we are presented with a ‘half-formed cave' with a brook running in front of it and 'precipitous rocks' functional enough for Dungarren to climb down them—there is the execution scene … and the scene on a 'wild moor' where, to the sounds and sights of thunder and lightning, we witness the gathering of the women who believe they are witches. This spectacular storm, coupled with the appearance of the mysterious Murrey, is seen by Grizeld Bane as proof that Satan has appeared to them, and we might also be swept away by the force of the scene to believe that the supernatural has appeared … Baillie works against such a reaction, however, as we know that Murrey is forced by circumstance to play the part of Satan.[14]

And later on, after describing the series of 'misunderstandings' devolved from this situation, Cox remarks:

> This moment provides a metatheatrical commentary on our experience of spectacle: when we are swept away by what we see but do not hear or understand, we can fall into error; what it seems so [*real*] may be only an illusion or play-acting.[15]

In conclusion, Cox's interpretation places Annabel, the real witch of the play, that “beautiful, cultured” heroine who succumbs to the evils of “uncontrolled passion”, among the spectators, based on the author’s previously making the character of Annabel watch the execution scene from a window.[16] In this way, the spectacle of passion happens simultaneously *on stage* and *offstage* with Lady Annabel mirroring the audience's reactions to the public execution of the innocent heroine (Violet). It is a clever invention which does not solve the problems of characterization the play is riddled with. Lady Annabel's anger at being spurned by Dungarren changes direction upon seeing her victim walk to her death, turns against herself, destroys her before she sees the result of her vengeance; which has nothing to do with the

prurient excitement of the crowd, real or fictional, attending the immolation of an innocent victim. Annabel's 'uncontrolled' passion for Dungarren is the character's *hybris,* the motor of the tragedy (Baillie's intention was to make *Witchcraft* a tragedy, and the subtitle in the 1836 edition confirms her wish). In this sense, her eventual invasion of the audience's space would become a distraction and would endanger the expected *cathartic* experience (the expected closure in classic tragedy).

All this to say that the *Introductory Discourse* had to be left behind; for the Year II *Rhetoric of Passion* workshop I used as a guide for the gestural expression the Engel-Siddons *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* which contained clear and solid definitions of the passions system.

3.1 The Rhetoric of Passions

The theme of the workshop (which gave its title) was inspired by the following anecdote quoted by Joseph Roach that evokes the twin origins of acting and oratory:

> The most widely circulated [in the 17th century] anecdote on this subject derived from Plutarch's account of Demosthenes, who, after studying deportment and gesture under the actor Andronicus, was asked to name the three most important parts of oratory: 'Action,' Demosthenes is said to have replied, 'Action, and again Action'.[17]

This anecdote can read, and has read throughout centuries, as a proof of the 'preeminent' position rhetoric occupies in relation to acting: the actor (Andronicus) teaches the orator (Demosthenes) the 'external' means necessary to stir the public's interest in the ideas delivered through his speeches, but the credits go to the orator; and, conversely, as a proof that theatre,

represented by the actor in the story, uses a much more 'elaborate' form of expression than the orator to satisfy the same goal: arousing interest among the audiences.

Both interpretations revolve around the idea of action, which in the rhetorical tradition is a component of *pronuntiatio*, the act of delivery, "a physical act performed by the body as a whole, of which the articulate speaking voice was an important part, but by no means the only important part".[18] In the (Aristotelian) theatrical tradition, action is the generic principle, the beginning of a process (drama) that "begins with his [the actor's] own body and quickly extends beyond it".[19]

In other words, the actor's delivery with all its components (speech, body language, movements) is part of a greater discourse, sometimes self-generated, sometimes interpreting (translating) a particular author's text, nevertheless, part of a process that does not end with his own delivery. It is rhetorical, but also dramatic, in the sense that it builds, in real space and time, fictitious worlds, constructs narratives that rhetoric need only evoke in order to capture the attention of the spectator.

As Roach remarks, all the acting treatises that equate the actor with the orator erase the difference between fiction and reality based on the highly codified gestural expressions used in both types of delivery, theatrical and rhetorical, leaving aside the compositional device specific to each form (such as the plot, for instance, which sets goals for the characters' actions).

Since the "theatre of the passions" draws its inspiration from Quintilian's work which, in its turn, draws on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, not on Aristotle's *Poetics*, and all the acting theories developed for this particular form of theatre tend to overlook the dramaturgical structure. Demosthenes, though, must have known both works (besides being contemporaries, both he and Aristotle were important figures at the court of King Philip of Macedonia) so his reiterated cry,

“Action…Action and again Action”, may prove his actual discovery of the structural difference between rhetoric and theatre, whence the title of the workshop, “The Rhetoric of Passion”, and the articulation of the workshop on Action, both in the rhetorical and dramatic connotation of the term.

The workshop was divided in three parts:

Part One: dedicated to the recovery of the rhetorical action through dramatic action.

Part Two: dedicated to stylization of movement in "natural" acting.

Part Three: dedicated to the creation of a "grammar of movement" for *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie and the insertion of gestural sentences into the spoken delivery (based on the dialogue in the same script).

In Part One, the actors performed a series of directed (controlled) improvisations meant to familiarize them with the gestural transcription of mental images (*visiones*), developed on the following themes: The Human Body reflects the Cosmos, Man is a Machine, Man is a Living Statue, The Animal Spirit in Man, Mythical Heroes Possessed by Passions (Anger) which Reflect the Ideas of Human Nature, Nature, and The Human Body in Relation to the Acting Rules of the "Theatre of the Passions".

The sensual stimuli used to create those images were:

Visual: paintings by Eugene Delacroix, James Draper, Henri Serrur.

Audio: acoustic guitar improvisations, synchronic (following respiratory rhythms or “the Echo effect”) and a-synchronic (musical phrases modulating movement or “the Orpheus effect”).

Audio (speech): live storytelling based on the Greek mythology and Central European folk tales (delivered by the director) in synchronicity with the movement.

In order to avoid stylization by any other means than ‘natural’ gesture responding to

‘natural’ impulse, all forms of mimetic expression such as travesty, pantomime and onomatopoeia were *a priori* excluded from the exercise, the actors being asked to identify themselves strictly with the representations corresponding to their own physical and physiological configuration. In the case of animal representations, metaphorical expressions were allowed so as to enhance characterization, a ‘weak’ man, for instance, being attributed sheep behavior (gesture and sound included), a ‘vain’ woman taking up the behaviour of a peacock, and so on.

The second goal of these exercises was to create ‘stylized’ enactments by monitoring the effects of ‘personification’ (the act of embodying one's soul, its passions and its actions, common to both rhetoric and acting) by means of controlling the respiratory cycle (equivalent of a physical rendering of the transmigration of the ‘spirit’ from character to actor) and organizing the dramatic action so as to follow the (‘natural’) breathing cycle of each actor.

This process was conducted at two levels:

Internal: the actors were asked to match their movements with their own breathing cycle. No standards of length, volume or intensity were applied, everyone breathing at their own rhythm with upward gestures performed on the intake of breath, and downward gestures on exhalation. Hypercapnia (retention of breath between inhalation and exhalation) was used to suspend all action/freeze/strike a pose.

External: the actors were asked to ‘tune’ their respiratory cycles and corresponding physical movements to the musical phrases (acoustic guitar, free improvisation) so as to create a flow of *energeaia* (supreme animation in language, the effect of "vivid metaphors" Aristotle compared to "kinesis", here, literally, translated as “movement”) that circulates among the members of the group.

Each improvisation session followed a scenario illustrating the actions of one character (or group of characters) preceding the action represented in the particular work of art chosen as a source of inspiration for the exercise. The actors were directed to illustrate each action with their entire body, the 'final' image/the tableau being a reconstruction, in gestural terms, of the model (painting, sculpture) and constituting the end of the improvisation.

With these in mind, I will describe the improvisations based on the theme of "mythical characters possessed by passions" which have provided the blueprint for the gestural transcriptions in "Women on the Moor" and "Fishing for Information" (the Lovers' scene), the first and second act of the adaptation, and have set the frame for the entire process of reconstruction.

Improvisation One.

The Story: Medea, wife of Jason, the conqueror of the Golden Fleece, who, having been abandoned by her husband after sacrificing her father and brother to his (her husband' s) ambition, lets herself be possessed by anger and kills her own children to quench her thirst for revenge. James Draper's painting *The Golden Fleece* represents Medea in the act of sacrificing her adolescent brother to the fury of the sea that threatens to engulf the ship carrying Jason's booty. Medea herself is part of that booty, as suggested by her reclining on a bed made of the Golden Fleece; the two central figures of the tableau, Medea and her brother, are captured in a half-broken embrace that could go towards the separation or towards the reunification of the two bodies, depending on a concatenation of 'visible' factors such as: the swelling of the sea, the child resisting the sailors' efforts to throw him overboard, etc., but also on the 'invisible' waves of passion previously driving Medea to murder her father, betray her countrymen, abandon her position as a priestess of Hecate, and ultimately kill her own offspring.

fig. 25 Herbert James Draper, *The Golden Fleece,* 1904, oil on canvas, 155 x 272.5 cm. Courtesy of Bradford Museums, Galleries & Heritage (Cartwright Hall).

This half-broken embrace concentrates all the actions Medea performs throughout the Golden Fleece epic, which makes it function dramaturgically as a prologue to Medea's story. Then, instead of building the act of personification on the actions performed by the character before this "rupture", I chose the act of *childbirth* as the central metaphor and directed the actors to rebuild the tableau on basis of the gestures of child delivery: e.g. the woman pushing, rhythmically, the child responding, rhythmically, to the push, until both bodies were disentangled. Afterwards, they rolled on the side, the mother attempting to reach the newborn son while exhaling, and the newborn son doing the same movement of reaching out to her, while releasing his breath.

Visually, these last movements reproduced exactly the half-broken embrace in Draper's painting, but with a deeper meaning to the scene as the symbolism of life-giving was added to the symbolism of death. Moreover, the exercise could be done repetitively, with the same

emotional results on behalf of the actors, the breathing patterns sustaining but also heightening the movement at will. None of the actors having had any personal experience of childbirth, or having witnessed the birth of a child, I gave out the breathing exercises I remembered from my own experience, thus creating that general state of elation I recalled as typical to the last stages of the event, which the actors claimed afterwards was “contagious” and “easy” to reach every time they would be asked to perform the action.

The most significant result of the Medea improvisation was that we began to understand how to read the "gestures of passion" illustrated in works of art and acting manuals—at the beginning of the workshop the difference between the "false" and "true" gestures in the Engel-Siddons *Illustrations* was quite indiscernible even to those who had read the entire material, myself included—in the sense that we were able to create ‘natural’ behaviour for a character ‘possessed’ through the natural means of breathing and moving with the breath, and had a general idea of how to stylize the actions of such a character through repeating those patterns of movement that would suggest the emotional cycle we wanted to portray.

Improvisation Two.

fig. 26 Henri Serrur, *Ajax maudissant les dieux,* 1820. Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts.

Story: Ajax is a hero of the Trojan War, second in courage and military skills only to Achilles. After Achilles' death, he disputes the possession of the latter's armor with Ulysses and, losing the dispute, wants to avenge his honor by killing the judges who deprived him of the dead hero's spoils. His murderous rage is deflected by Athena, Ulysses' protector and Goddess of Reason, who makes him take a flock of sheep for an enemy commando attacking the Greek camp and thus butcher the entire army livestock to the last beast before realizing his mistake. Ashamed of his ridiculous exploit, Ajax commits suicide, blaming the gods for his act of self-destruction.

Henri Serrur's painting *The Suicide of Ajax* represents the hero in a last act of defiance, half-fallen to the ground, half-standing, threatening the skies with his right fist while his left hand grips the rock beside him so as to delay the fall.

There is no sign of a weapon, nor of a wound that would justify his collapse (according to the legend, Ajax killed himself by falling on his sword, which is the only honorable way to die for a warrior), but the stormy sky and the rocky peak where he stands suggest an eventual death by jumping from a promontory into the sea below.

The image was much easier to read than that of Medea: Ajax's passion is still unspent, continues in the 'mind' from which it was born (the wound is invisible; therefore the passion must be of the soul). His anger drives the body towards the precipice, spasmodically, making him look like a puppet on a torn string; the color code is also directly readable: *red* for Anger (the red of the flapping cape around his body), *green* for Envy (the stormy sky, seat of the divinity, is almost green, the color of bile), and, interestingly, a glint of *yellow* for Joy, encircles the hero's head.

The scenario for this improvisation was based on the hero's climbing the mountain (why

not the Olympus?) in a last attempt to defy the gods. The gestures of the character were articulated on the duality *defiance-defeat*, upward movements alternating with downward movements, the actor observing the spasmodic breath of agony in order to produce the "torn puppet" effect.

The most important result of the exercise was that it confirmed our incipient method of codifying bodily movement and proved the efficiency of breathing patterns in constructing 'meaningful' physicality. Another important result of the exercise was that we could build, at the gestural level, a 'dramaturgy of passion' that did not use psychological characterization in order to obtain 'realistic' effects; this greatly helped with constructing the characters in *Witchcraft* (as I will describe in Part Two) but also created a serious problem in terms of genre, for the comic effects of some of our most 'realistic' configurations proved almost impossible to control.

In Ajax's case, for example, the alternate upward and downward movements regulated by the short breaths of agony made the actor look 'deranged', which struck off the tragic atmosphere of the performance we wished; however faithfully following the 'natural'/realistic patterns of behaviour of a moribund, the actor's fitful movements kept stirring laughter in the audience (the actors attending the performance of their colleague).

The recurrent explanation for this unwanted reaction was the following: "The guy looks like a beheaded chicken, flapping about somebody's backyard". This reminded me of Garrick's mechanical wig that had the same backfiring effect on the audience, except that in our case, the flaw was intrinsic to the acting, as no props were used to complete the character's appearance. Repetition was, of course, one of the sources for trouble (in the commedia dell'arte system, repetitive gestures are an important tool for caricature) but stylized movement depending on recurrent patterns of behaviour had to be part of the new system. That it was not a matter of

modern sensitivity clashing with 'Romantic sensibility' (the actor playing Ajax did conjure up the image of his character's agony while performing the exercise) was proven by the fact that the same method of creating gestural expression, applied to other tragic characters (e.g. Medea) did not have the same effect in this case. The problem remained unsolved until the group went through a RASA box intensive session under the direction of Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer, in which it appeared that quick switches from one emotional state to another and, subsequently, from one gestural expression to the other, tended to provoke laughter.

In other words, quick changes in the rhythm of the action, however true to the changes in the emotional state of the performer, often give the performer's gestures a mechanical aspect that seems 'unnatural', incongruous even, and therefore are susceptible of provoking hilarity among the spectators. Going back to the *Suicide of Ajax*: the 'beheaded chicken' effect could be avoided by slowing down the rhythm of the transitions from one state to the other, and from one type of movement to the next, which we eventually achieved with the expected result.

In *Part Two*, the actors performed a series of improvisations based on the Engel-Siddons *Practical Illustrations,* each of them choosing one gesture of passion and building his/her own sequence of gestures leading to that particular expression.

The purpose of the exercise was to identify the patterns of behaviour specific to 'ordinary' men and women (the unheroic characters) and use them to create a gestural language that would encode the 'inner' turmoils of the people we meet in everyday life. As a consequence, we treated the chosen images as illustrations of such everyday activities which passion would disturb, interrupt, change the course of, etc. For example, the illustration of 'Despair' features a young woman running towards the spectator/viewer (the actual pose freezes the figure in between steps with her upper body launched forward) arms dangling, palms downturned as if to

reach at a falling object, her eyes averted from some unbearable sight outside the frame.

This image was treated as an illustration of the character's reaction to a fateful piece of news (e.g. the news about her lover's death on the battlefield).The actions immediately preceding her running away (from the fateful news) were imagined as follows: the woman is at her needlework (an ordinary activity) when the fateful letter arrives. She interrupts her work to read the letter. The letter falls from her hands as she leaves the chair. She runs away from the sight of her ruined hopes, but she knows that there is no escape from reality, so she stops running, pauses in between steps, then goes back to the beginning of the action.

The running-and-stopping pattern, once identified as 'shock' behaviour, conveyed a sense of 'naturalness' to the prescribed, emphatic gesture in the Engel-Siddons' illustration of 'Despair', with the result that most of the gestural vocabulary offered by the *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* could further on be interpreted as signs of a repressed reality that breaks through the norms regulating daily expression.

In *Part Three* we used the Engel-Siddons vocabulary of gesture to construct sentences of movement specific to each passion personified by the characters in *Witchcraft* (the adaptation) then combined these sentences with non-verbal expressions extracted from the preliminary improvisations (animal and mechanical expressions) in order to build a coherent non-verbal language that would sustain the spoken delivery. I will describe this process of construction for the character of Robert Kennedy of Dungarren, as it combines almost all the results of the improvisations performed during the workshop.

The construction of Dungarren's gestural expression.

Dungarren's non-verbal expression was founded on the comic version of the Ajax improvisation which we placed in the context of the love triangle composed of Annabella, Violet

and himself. Ajax's alternate gestures of Anger and Grief now performed in swift motion by Dungarren were given the realistic, concrete purpose of destroying Violet's garden (pulling the flowers out of the flower bed and throwing the torn stems in the air) which he, himself, had provided the seeds for. His reaction to Violet' s appearance was moulded on the gestures of the horse frightened by lightning and horses fighting in a barn borrowed from Delacroix' paintings, the immediately following gestures of love gradually transforming the animal expressions of sexual fury (violent, instinctual, equally inspired by Delacroix' *Stallions fighting in a Barn*) into the human embrace symbolizing "innocent love"(sexually charged but regulated by "decorum") as illustrated in the Siddons-Engel treatise. The breaking of the embrace (derived from the Medea improvisation) brought Dungarren back to the broken puppet pattern and ended the sequence.

fig. 27 Eugène Delacroix, *Arab Horses Fighting in a Stable,* 1860, oil on canvas, 64.5 x 81 cm. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

Some of these gestures remained visible through the spoken delivery (i.e. Ajax's rising and falling movements, the intertwining of the horses' manes and the fighting stance of the stallions in the barn) but the entire sequence could not be preserved (for any of the characters) in the actual performance as it seemed to duplicate the message of the speeches. As a consequence, we chose to perform these gestural plots as prologues to the fully enacted scenes and thus turn them into full-fledged pantomimes moulded on the eighteenth-century 'dumb' shows accompanied by music.[20]

At the same time, the removal of the complete gestural sentences from the performance risked making the characters look flat, the dialogue stilted and the entire experience simply boring. This led us to the conclusion that the acting style required for Baillie's dramaturgy (and, indeed, for other dramaturgical experiments belonging to the same period) might be a hybrid, or the result of the intersection between the rhetorical and theatrical expression of the passions, which became extinct with the emergence of the aesthetics of naturalism and psychological realism in the late 19th-century drama.

In view of all these, we decided that our partial reconstruction of the gestural codes of the 'theatre of the passions' could apply, fully, to the melodramatic acting system. Some questions remained, still, unanswered. Did these codes apply to the discourse of such characters that would not be articulated on one single passion? And if not, what kind of stylization was to be given to those characters' movements? Should facial expressions be codified at all in order to enhance

bodily eloquence? Why not use masks instead? And, most importantly, how would we arouse the public interest, today, in this conventional expression of passion when, as Judith Slagle remarks, "one of the hallmarks of modernity is the self-conscious examination of one's emotions, separately and (as it were) dispassionately", when passions are exposed for all to see in daily life, and inhibitions, social or personal, are sent off packing in the name of personal development?[21]

The answers to these questions were given through the staging of *Witchcraft* (the original version) at Concordia University, in Fall 2011.

[1] Engel and Siddons, *Practical Illustrations,* 82.

[2] Baillie, *Witchcraft*.

[3] Ibid, 2.2.

[4] Ibid, 2.2.

[5] Engel and Siddons, *Practical Illustrations;* Joanna Baillie, "Introductory Discourse" in *A Series of Plays* (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1798): 1–72.

[6] Baillie, *Witchcraft,* 2.2.

[7] Ibid, 1.3.

[8] Joseph R. Roach, "Darwin's Passion: The Language of Expression on Nature's Stage," *Discourse* 13, no. 1 (1990): 40–58.

[9] Baillie, "Introductory Discourse.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Jeffrey N. Cox, "Staging Baillie" in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist*, ed. Thomas C. Crochunis (London: Routledge, 2004): 158–79.

[15] Cox, "Staging Baillie".

[16] Ibid.

[17] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (University of Michigan Press, 1993): 32.

[18] Roach, *The Player's Passion,* 32.

[19] Ibid, 32.

[20] 2011 Workshop.

[21] Judith Bailey Slagle, *Joanna Baillie, A Literary Life* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002).

Chapter Four
Tableau: An Accommodating Religion.
Part 2.

fig. 28 Ecstasy, Marie Pascale. *Leonce and Lena.* Photo © Marie-Charlotte Aubin, 2013.

4. Ecstasy after Buchner or the Modern melodrama

"The word melodrama means, originally, a drama accompanied by music. It appears to have first been used in this sense by Rousseau, to describe a play in which he sought a new emotional expressivity through the mixture of spoken soliloquy, pantomime, and orchestral accompaniment. The word then came to characterize a popular drama derived from pantomime (itself accompanied by music) that did not fit within any of the accepted genres. Music was an important element in Diderot's aesthetics; it was given a durable role in nineteenth-century theatre and then became a staple in the contemporary form that most relayed and supplanted melodrama, the cinema…Considering mainly the 'classical' melodrama as it was first established in France at the dawn of the nineteenth century, we find a fully realized, coherent theatrical mode whose structures and characteristics, in their very purity and even crudity, can teach us to read a whole body of modern literature with a finer perception of its project … we find there an intense emotional and ethical drama based on the manichaeistic struggle of good and evil, a world where one lives for and by is seen in terms of, and as determined by, the most fundamental psychic relations and cosmic ethical forces."[1]

I have quoted, rather extensively, from Peter Brooks' definition of the melodrama, for it gives the most comprehensive view of the origins and evolution of the concept, its various interpretations and large range of applicability, its power to express the entire body of thought of the "post-sacred era".[2]

It defines melodrama as a mode and a poetics rooted in the poetics of the Enlightenment, working in relation to the other modes of realism, comedy and romance to recover, "demonstrat[e] and mak[e] operative the essential moral universe" forged by the ideologues of the French Revolution.[3]

The theatrical mode lends its structures to the other, mainly literary, melodramatic expressions and the theatrical language of word and body, with a vocabulary borrowed from the lingering traditions of pantomime and popular drama and churned into a new syntax, becomes the esperanto of the entire cultural production of the modern era.

Brooks describes the theatrical melodrama as a dramaturgical construction founded on the "struggle of good and evil", the generic principle that determines the "moral polarization and schematization" of the characters.[4] The plot is articulated on the simple scheme of "persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue" with a lavish display of "extreme states of being, situations, actions…plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety" meant to enhance the drama and heighten the spectator's emotions.[5] Other elements, borrowed from the traditional pantomime and popular melodrama (such as inflated oratory, lavish aesthetic ornamentation, various degrees of intensity of the melos in ascendant trajectory, various degrees of spectacle in continuous accumulation) define the melodramatic performance as excess-oriented and catering to the public's need to indulge in strong emotionalism and, sometimes, self-pity.

This definition looks as exhaustive as the first, and if we embrace Brooks' modal

approach, all the elements he identifies as specific for the theatrical mode can be traced in many, if not all, of the theatrical expressions characteristic of the nineteenth century.

Any theatrical text that appears after the 1800s, the accepted date of birth of the melodrama, can be described as 'melodramatic' if based on “the manichaeistic struggle of good and evil”, articulated on the patterns of 'excess' and using a mixture of dramatic genres and performance styles to generate new meaning.[6] Brooks himself acknowledges the elusiveness of the concept; Marsden, who strikes 'excess' from the list of elements specific to melodrama but keeps the rest piecemeal, calls it a “leaping fish”, Van Kooy and Cox retain the “visual language” as its main feature and so on.[7] ‘Elusiveness' seems to be the main characteristic of the object.

The problem of specificity arises most acutely when it comes to identify the nature of a highly innovative, revolutionary text such as Georg Büchner's *Leonce and Lena*. Written in 1836, a few months before the death of the author, the play presents many of the features identified as melodramatic: it is a mixed form, part traditional comedy, part romantic drama, with a loose dramaturgical structure composed of a main love plot, a political subplot and two fantasy episodes, with schematically characterised figures (the King and Valerio seem to be replicas of the commedia dell'arte characters of Pantalone and Arlecchino) and elements of popular entertainment (e.g. Valerio's comic numbers, Rosetta's dancing and singing act) introduced for sheer effect. Extreme states of being, actions and situations abound as the characters' overt goal is to reach ecstasy (not the actual fulfilment by marriage of their sexual fantasies but the state of abandonment which frees the soul) and their rhetoric, gestures included, (Rosetta's dance constitutes a complete gestural sentence which substitutes for speech) is extravagant enough to fit into the category of 'excess'.

Since all these elements are also found in other forms of popular theatre—especially, in the commedia dell'arte performances which thrive on spectacle and cater to the public as a rule—all we can say after reading Brooks' description of melodrama is that *Leonce and Lena* qualifies as popular drama.

The only constitutive element absent from Büchner's melodrama is the "manichaeistic struggle of good and evil" which shapes the quintessentially moral universe of the post-revolutionary era.[8] There is no 'good' to be pursued in Büchner's play, no overt villainy to be crushed and, despite the clear similarities between Hamlet and Leonce, no world unhinged (by lust) to put back on its (moral) hinges. Leonce is, mainly, a jaded spirit in search of new sensations; Lena, a virgin who thirsts for extreme experiences; King Pierre, a victim of his own rigidity; and Valerio's ethics, derived from the needs of his stomach, ranges at best as a classical joke.

The "struggle of good and evil" might be seen as driving the political sub-plot, except there is no attempt on Leonce's behalf to overthrow the corrupted old regime represented by his father, King Pierre. The only 'plotting' done by Valerio to change the course of action and stop Leonce's coronation consists of the prank he plays at the king's expense by making the latter abdicate in favor of a life-size puppet.

But is moral polarisation absolutely specific to the melodrama? If we pursue the comparison between Hamlet and Leonce, we will see that "the manichaeistic struggle between good and evil" is operative—in another dimension, of course, but operative nevertheless—and not necessarily related to a specific moral code.

In *Hamlet*, 'good' equates to 'harmony', 'evil' is 'chaos' and Hamlet's goal is to restore harmony, the cosmic harmony destroyed by the assassination of the anointed monarch (his

father).

This does make a hero of Hamlet, maybe the first modern hero but certainly not a 'good guy', not an innocent whose sad end must be vindicated. What saves him from the label of villainy (he does kill Polonius and shows no regret for the deed) is his imperfection as a human being, an imperfection that anyone can identify in themselves and easily empathize with. Leonce is no ‘good guy’ either, for his goal, however 'cosmic' (he wants to reach the state of total liberty/disintegration), is purely personal (freedom, impossible to reach in the material world, will be attained in death). Yet his 'villainy' (he kills Rosetta, if only in thought), explained by his imperfection, becomes an object of empathy.

I am comparing two very different genres of drama: a tragedy with a comedy, *hybris* with moral flaw, but my point is that moral polarisation is a common enough feature, subject to interpretation by the current morality, always operative in a manichaeistic system.

The question of specificity remains unanswered since so many of the previously identified constitutive features of the melodrama are shared by all kinds of nineteenth century (and earlier) popular dramas. What is clearly typical of melodrama, its fundamental feature not shared by other dramatic expressions, lies in the use of music (and sound) not as an accompaniment for movement and/or speech, but as generator of action, as part of the plot. In this sense, I think it worth to reopen the etymological discussion, all the more so since J.J. Rousseau's experiment in melodrama from the eighteenth century aimed at the revival of the original genre.

Brooks seems to think that the original term was not in use, or not used with its original Renaissance connotations when Rousseau tried to rescue melodrama from oblivion. But he also remarks that music plays an important role in Rousseau’s and Diderot's poetics and so may be

the 'key' to their theories about the new form of drama derived from the Italian tradition.

Whichever way, the original sense of the word is important to know if we want to examine the new connotations of the term in nineteenth-century theatrical terminology. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the original Italian term *melodramma* means, literally, drama-by-music, *teatro per musica,* and refers to the experimental work of Giovan Battista Andreini (1576–1654), capocomico of the *Fedeli* commedia dell'arte troupe.

From what we know of Andreini's practice (his plays are apparently direct applications of his theoretical model), his definition of acting states that the player's body 'vibrates' like a stringed instrument, producing sounds and movements which morph into music, dance and speech according to the player's inspiration and the theme of the play. In his manifesto for the second edition of *Lo Schiavetto,* "The Little Slave Boy" (1612), Andreini invites the future performers of his play, *li rappresentanti,* "to permit this *Schiavetto,* [this little slave] the liberty to escape from the text into the theater" thus cleverly punning "on the title of the *commedia:* the play is the slave, the text the chains of slavery, the performance an embodied escape" which, as Emily Wilbourne explains, is a way to describe his theatre as a place "that frees the written word into sound and gestures, into space and agency".[9]

Working from a rhetorical perspective, the sixteenth-century theatre theorist Leone de' Sommi identifies the commedia dell'arte actor's performance with "the eloquence of the body" practiced by the orators of the Antiquity.[10] The term of "body eloquence" is borrowed from Cicero and applies perfectly to the physical component of the actor's delivery in the commedia dell'arte performance. To quote Wilbourne again:

> Both physical and phonic, the 'language of the body' consists, in Cicero's own words, 'of movement or gestures as well as of voice or speech.' While the poet sings only

> metaphorically, the actor does so quite literally. His or her movements include those of the mouth, throat, chest, and diaphragm that send the words of the *commedia* out beyond the proscenium and into the freedom of the theater; corporeal eloquence can be both seen and heard.[11]

By the time Rousseau and Diderot work on redefining pantomime as a 'musical drama', Andreini's acting model was long forgotten and the term melodrama applied to the new German operas which introduced dramatic structures, sometimes forcibly, into the musical scenarios. Some echoes of de' Sommi's theory of bodily eloquence persist in J.J. Engel's *Practical Illustrations*, but the perspective is different and the word as such is never mentioned in Engel's treatise as I have already described in Chapter Two. This means that the original melodrama was, essentially, a performance genre built on the structures of the commedia dell'arte performance.

The "manichaeistic struggle of good and evil" appears as the founding principle of the 'ethic' drama of the nineteenth century but not necessarily of the melodrama, as a theatrical species whose origins seem by this token to be entirely poetic.

Andreini's successful career as a commedia dell'arte actor, director and writer runs parallel with his activity as an innovator and, long after his passing into eternity, some of his poetic innovations will subsist in forms of popular drama such as the pantomime, or other species directly derived from the commedia dell'arte (opera buffa). That does not mean that the theatrical mainstream completely ignored his findings; as J. Franko remarks, the *comédie-ballet* invented by Moliere and Lully, and before that, the *ballet d'action* are forms of theatre-by-music, *teatro per musica,* in which music generates action and determines character configuration.

All this to say that if we move the discussion out of the ethical sphere and into the aesthetic domain where it seems to originate, the concept of melodrama seems less elusive; its

ethical drive comes from the dating method, from placing the (re)birth of melodrama in the pre-French Revolutionary era based on the reappearance of the term in relation to the repertory that vehicles the ideologies of the Enlightenment (in themselves, 'revolutionary' because censured by the Old Regime).

Even so, melodrama seems to rise, always, with the rise of a new philosophy, with a theoretical quest which finds its testing ground in theatre, with the actor playing the patient as in Diderot's experiments and the play itself masquerading as a scientific report which contains both the description of the process and the conclusions drawn from the test. Apparently, Andreini also used theatre as a vehicle for the libertine ideas, quintessentially materialistic, that could not be openly expressed in the Counter Reformation era; the commedia dell'arte improvisation system with its infinite possibilities of association offered the perfect ground for these ideas to grow and proliferate.

The acute stimulation of the senses, which Andreini chose as his method for disseminating the libertine cognitive theories, is entirely original and lends its originality to the product. This powerful sensuality of the original melodrama, its clearly erotic quality come from the overstimulation Andreini inflicts on the spectator by the continuous proliferation, in his plays, of images and sounds that combine to keep the public in a continuous state of arousal. It is a blatant characteristic that does not necessarily appear in the configuration of nineteenth-century melodramas, but which clearly figures among the basic features of twentieth-century silent films, the direct descendants of the original model.

Some distant echoes of the libertine ideas can be traced in Diderot's aesthetic of drama which draws on the empiricist theories of cognition, but the plays in which he illustrates his theory of theatre, such as *Le fils naturel*, ("The Natural Son") and *Le père de famille* ("The

Patriarch"), focus on the ethical aspects of the dramatic genre and *le drame bourgeois,* the bourgeois drama, the new form of theatre he launches on the Parisian stage is not endowed with an acting system specific to the dramaturgy he creates. Moreover, his famous essay *Le paradoxe sur le comédien* ("The Paradox of the Actor") continues to uphold the anti-emotionalist approach to acting which does not seem to correspond to the requirements of the melodramatic genre.

Diderot's original approach to theatre, in which we can trace some of the ideas of the Renaissance libertine thinkers (the libertine movement revived in the eighteenth century referred, mostly, to the specific sexual practices) appears in his theory of the language of 'cry and gesture' on which he bases his search for a new theatrical language, "a language of presence, purity, immediacy" capable to recover on stage "the language of nature", the mythical idiom "giving a direct presentation of things prior to the alienation" into articulate language.[12]

Theories of gesture as the "primitive language of mankind" which operated with "the first sign, the unmediated sign, dependent for its signifying on presence" are typical of the empiricist trend of thought but with Diderot the sensual component of this "direct presentation of things" by way of bodily eloquence, which happens only in theatre, becomes the axis of his theatrical thought.[13]

The new dramaturgy he proposes to the French stage, inspired by the pantomime of the Antiquity, does not have to be 'mute' in order to escape rhetorical excess. It is sufficient to invent a new language in which the spoken word stirs latent images by means of cry and gesture and in conjunction with the subject matter of the play for the theatrical experience to be 'vivified', for the public to resonate, physically, with the sight of the actors' bodies moving on stage, vibrate, physically, with the sound and music pouring from the actors' throats, abandon themselves to the magic of the performance.

All this to say that this heightened sensuality which Diderot attributes to pantomime seems to be the major characteristic of the modern melodrama much more so than the inflated rhetoric, lavish ornamentation, frequent changes of sets, identified as specific to the genre by modern critics.[14]

The characteristics of (classical) melodrama which I have identified as specific are the following:

1) The use of music to generate action. Dance and musical enactments are organically integrated to the plot and sustained by characterisation (e.g. a character who is a professional dancer will play a dance scene).

2) Strong characterization articulated on a particular passion. Schematization is used only in the construction of the minor figures imported from another repertory. The comic characters, usually, the servants, are imported from the commedia dell'arte and the clown arts, with or without the original mask, costume, acting props but always expected to perform in their original style (e.g. if old, expected to weep, tremble, stumble, etc.).

3) Moral polarisation usually based on the idea of sin. Villainy is attributed, mostly, to aristocratic male figures, clerics, outlaws. Women and children are, usually, innocent. Great male sinners from older repertory are continuously revived, eventually by changing the story to make them avoid due punishment (Don Juan).

4) Fantastic geography, utopic kingdoms, idyllic rural landscapes, wildernesses, churches, cemeteries, sometimes all of them together changing in rapid succession, are recurrent sets.

5) Intrigue, suspense, peripety, mystery, magic abound but the main romantic love scheme remains intact and constitutes the link between episodes.

6) Potent visual effects, frequently choreographed movement (moments of agony, duels, rapes), tableaus, colour codes for lights (*red* for *murder, blue* for *ghost* scenes), natural objects

introduced in conventional settings (a horse, a dog), rain, blood are used in all the pieces of the repertory.

7) **Erotic imagery,** partial nudity, sexual phantasms (mainly *incesto*) acted out in a dream state, delirium, madness are fixed elements.

Some of these features (the most important in my opinion) are constitutive features of Georg Büchner's comedy *Leonce and Lena.*

4.1 An allegory of Love in melodramatic style

fig. 29 Frederic Jeanrie, Myriame Larose, Marie Pascale. *Leonce and Lena.* Photo © Pablo Pugliese, Marie-Charlotte Aubin, 2013.

It is possible that Büchner followed a 'classical' recipe in writing this text, but the source of inspiration for the play remains unknown. That it was an experiment (in comedy, apparently) is proven by the fact that Büchner wrote the text on command, in view of entering a comedy contest. In this respect, the play meets the first criterium: it is an experimental piece conceived outside the theatre and was never tested in performance until 1893, seventy years after its conception, when it was dubbed by critics as representative of the European theatrical avant-

garde.

The source of inspiration might have been a printed version of one of Kotzebue's romantic comedies, or some other obscure text (some historians point to an anonymous popular comedy entitled *Ponce de Leon*) but its absolute novelty proves that it was not a simple dramaturgical exercise. From another perspective, his oratorical prowess during his school years is documented, as his funereal address to Cato composed for his final exam in rhetoric won him a diploma for excellence, which might explain the impeccable, if somewhat verbose, composition of Leonce's and Valerio's monologues addressed to the public.

The plot follows more or less the classical triadic structure: the play develops over three acts and an epilogue in which Prince Leonce de Popo leaves his father's court to avoid the political marriage to Princess Lena de Pipi, who, in her turn, runs away from the arranged marriage. They unwarily fall in love with each other during their peregrinations across embattled German states, but the police get hold of them and force their return to King Pierre's (Leonce's father's) court. In the end, Valerio replaces the prince and princess with two life sized automata who perform in the royal wedding while the 'real' Prince Leonce and his princess, Lena, take themselves off to a magical kingdom accompanied by Valerio and the governess.

At first sight, *Leonce and Lena* emulates the commedia dell'arte scenarios which feature the adventures of two lovers who refuse to submit to parental authority and are tricked by the fates into accepting it. The characters are easily recognizable as commedia types: Leonce's father, King Pierre, who philosophizes on subjects like buttons, cufflinks, and cravats (and the order in which they must be put on his person to enhance his kingly appearance) but forgets to think about his famished subjects, is a new version of Dottore. Valerio, Leonce's valet, with his epic appetites and cosmic laziness, is a typical Arlecchino; Leonce, the frustrated youth,

resembles Lelio, the brooding Inamorato; and Lena, with her unabated curiosity and taste for adventure, resembles the Inamorata/Isabella.

The first melodramatic device becomes visible when we look more attentively at Scene 3 in Act 1, in which Leonce pushes his mistress, Rosetta, out of his life, or as she says: "out of time".[15] The scene starts with Leonce's summoning the Muses of Music, Dance and, most probably, Poetry (judging by the orders he gives his servants, and later on, to his mistress) to his secret boudoir:

> Are the shutters all shut? Light the candles! Away with the day! I want night, deep ambrosian night. Set the lights beneath the crystal domes amongst the oleanders, so they glint between the leaves like the flickering eyes of sleeping, dreaming girls. Move the roses over so the wine can bathe their blooms like drops of dew. Music! Where are the violins? Where is Rosetta? [16]

All the details point to the beginning of a secret ritual that goes back and forth between pagan and Christian symbols, between a mortuary chapel and Pan's temple, complete with nymphs waiting dreamily for the appearance of the lusty god.

The red wine pouring on red roses suggests that a sacrifice will take place, that innocent blood will be spilt. Rosetta (literally: The Little Rose), enters with the sound of the violins, which suggests that at least part of Leonce's soliloquy is delivered with musical accompaniment. An antiphon follows, delivered by Leonce and Rosetta:

> ROSETTA. You love me, Leonce?
>
> LEONCE. Why not?
>
> ROSETTA. You love me out of boredom?
>
> LEONCE. I love my boredom in you.

The antiphon ends with Leonce's command: “Dance, Rosetta, Dance!”.[17] Rosetta dances and sings a ballad, which talks about the wish to die and escape time: “My poor, tired feet, you have to dance / In shoes so gay, / And yet you'd sooner rest deep, deep / Beneath the clay”.[18]

The song substitutes for recitation and will continue to do so as Rosetta has only one other line—“You fool!”—to deliver before exiting. Also, from the moment she is commanded to dance, her actions are all choreographed as if she is unable to do anything other than dance away to her death. Conversely, Leonce's lines are all recited and calculated to correspond to an arrest in Rosetta's movement, to a moment of silence that shuts up her entire body, such as the moment in which Leonce describes her death as he imagines it:

> My head! I've buried the corpse of our love in there. Look through the windows of my eyes. Do you see how beautifully dead the poor thing is? See the two white roses on her cheeks, the red ones on her breasts?... I shall have to carry my head quite straight on my shoulders, like a weeper bearing the coffin of a child.[19]

Rosetta starts dancing again when Leonce stops speaking, and the switch from musical enactments (song, dance) to speech builds up the tension between silence and ‘noise’ to the point where both have to 'shut up'/cease to produce movement and sound:

> ROSETTA. Such a poor waif l am,
>
> So frightened on my own
>
> Oh, dear grief, I beg you- Won't you take me home?
>
> *He throttles her. Pause.*
>
> ROSETTA. You fool!
>
> *Exits.*[20]

Rosetta's scene (an entire musical number, in fact) is an extremely important one because

it reveals the emptiness of the hero, his desire to lay waste to what remains alive in his emptiness: his memory. The fact that Büchner has written it for music is evident; the lyrics work in cadence with an unheard tune (though no score was recovered from the family archive, it is obvious that some kind of tune was to animate the picture) and the movement is entirely choreographed.

There is a second musical scene, briefly sketched, that works on the same pattern of song-silence-speech (but no dance). It is the lullaby Lena sings obsessively to herself the morning of her unwanted wedding (Act 1, Scene 4):

> Yes, it's here. It's now. Time slipped slowly by. And all of a sudden the 'special day' is full upon me. A wreath of flowers adorns my hair—and the bells, the bells! See, if only the grass would grow up all around me and the bees go humming above my head. See now, I'm fully robed, with sprigs of rosemary in my hair. Isn't there an old song: In the churchyard bury me deep, / Let me like a baby sleep – [21]

Except that all three musical enactments are ascribed to Lena's role. Lena is not a professional singer, but women often sing to themselves, so the scene can integrate song without fear of becoming a sheer entertainment piece. She is also defined later as a 'voice' which fills the emptiness in Leonce's soul when the couple meet in the garden (Act 2, Scene 3):

> LENA. Who speaks?
>
> LEONCE. A dream.
>
> LENA. But dreams are blessed.
>
> LEONCE. Then dream yourself blessed and let me be your blessed dream.
>
> LENA. The most blessed dream of all is death.[22]

As a 'voice', she must cover all ranges from recitation to incantation to aria to whisper.

The garden scene displays an intricate design which combines modulations of voice, audible breathing sounds and heartbeat sounds (the characters meet in total darkness at first, then see each other in the moonlight), all these playing against a background made of noises of water, wind, animals and insects. It is for me the very image of that "symphony played on an infinite number of instruments" Andreini describes.[23] Lena's musical act illustrates the awakening of her senses, her total opening to the world of sensations, the primeval state of total awareness that leaves the subject of the experience speechless. In fact, Lena stops speaking altogether after this ecstatic experience. She changes into a mute character until the end of the play, when all the voices rise together: "Lena! Leonce! The prince! My son! The princess! I've been deceived! I've been deceived! Oh chance! Oh providence!".[24]

The visual language of the play is as carefully constructed as the musical, starting with the changes of light which catapult the heroes into mythical spaces and worlds, and change the color of the overall tableau. The 'artificial' night of the death ritual, for example, is installed by the appearance and multiplication of the candle lights which enhance the shades of amber and deepen the reds in the picture, whereas the 'real' night is conventionally brought in by a general wash (blue light) that picks up the white of the moon but not enough to create a shadow and light pattern in the set.

The metaphors for women are all based on visual associations: rosebuds suggest nipples; roses, the secret folds of femininity; the melons and figs in Valerio's final monologue reset these associations on the basis of edible equivalents, and so are the descriptions of the extreme states of being experienced by the protagonists. The moon is a "dead child" curled up in its black cradle; the universe, "a sacred cup" made of solar gold; and death, an endless summer in an Italianate garden.[25]

The two elements, musical and visual, combined heighten the sensuous atmosphere of the play to the point where the comic acts function like a blessed respite.

If we look at Valerio's lines, especially at his monologues, we will see that they meticulously work to dampen the fire, that they are written as negative responses to Leonce's lines.

I will quote to that effect from Leonce's final monologue, then give Valerio's response as an example of comic antithesis (Act 3, Scene 2):

> LEONCE. We'll have all the clocks in the kingdom destroyed, all calendars banned, then measure the hours by the flower-clock alone, by the rhythms of blossom and fruit … winter will be banished forever, in summer we'll have the warmth of Capri and Ischia, and all through the year we shall wander through violets and roses, oranges and bay.
>
> VALERIO. And then we shall all lie down in the shade and pray God for macaroni, melons and figs, for melodious voices, classical bodies and an accommodating religion. [26]

4.2 The mystical wedding

fig. 30 Bride and groom puppets. *Leonce and Lena,* 2013.

I started investigating the possibility that *Leonce and Lena,* Büchner's only comedy, includes elements of ecstatic performance based on my discovering that three of the scenes in the play—respectively, Scene 3 in Act 1, Scene 4 in Act 2 and Scene 2 in Act 3—linked together constitute an independent plot, a play within the play, in which the protagonists undergo a process of transfiguration. In an eventual staging, this play-within-a-play would be a mystery of transfiguration and the site for an ecstatic performance.

Dramaturgically, there was not much ground to sustain my case. The three scenes appear scattered, one in each act, with no direct connection to one another apart from Valerio's participation in all of them. At best, they could be construed as a romantic subplot meant to distract the attention of the censorship from the political satire that constitutes the best part of the play. The erotic charge, the poignant sensuality of the characters, the sheer physicality of their enactments and the sexually charged symbolic suffusing the dialogue only came to confirm this hypothesis.

The idea that these scenes were related came from the examination of the double wedding in Scene 2 of Act 3, the last scene of the play which I sensed had its roots somewhere else in the text but which I could not very well place within the general plot.

In this scene, Leonce and Lena are united in marriage, once in 'effigy' and once in person, the two events taking place at the same time, in the same space, with Valerio going back and forth between the two automata and the real couple. The 'effigies' are life sized automata (to be replaced by marionettes in the actual staging) and the 'persons', Leonce and Lena, double as voices for the automata which do not speak.

There is a strong suggestion that the dialogue follows the rhythms of the music accompanying the wedding ceremony, and that two types of performance, one liturgic and the

other profane, take place, with Valerio playing master of ceremony for both of the events. This effect of *dédoublement*, active solely in this one scene, was current practice in the theatre of the Baroque but only as a means to enhance spectacle. I could sense that Büchner was using it for other purposes.

The idea that the double wedding at the end of the play can be construed as a 'transfiguration' scenario came from Valerio's description of marriage as the union of two bodies that “eat, drink, sleep and excrete” in regular manner, have reached “the right age for coupling” and promise to reproduce themselves without delay.[27]

The automata thus represent the physical bodies Leonce and Lena shed prior to their ascension to the mythical throne of Paradise before the Fall. The double wedding features Leonce and Lena transcending the limits of their mortal body, a miracle witnessed by King Pierre, his court and the entire population of Popo but understood by only Valerio for what it really is: a transfiguration, a death that is life, and a life that is death masquerading as life.

A sacred drama is at work all throughout the commedia dell'arte plot, and this explains the apparently 'loose' structure of the play, its 'bizarre' architecture of sound, movement and silence that situates Büchner's text in a generic limbo, in between the confines of visual and aural art.

In the economy of the sacred drama, the transfiguration marks the end of a journey, so the beginning of this journey must be placed before Leonce and Lena shed their carnal body, in the scenes which treat the theme of the body as a vehicle for ecstatic experience, that is to say, precisely, in Act 1, Scene 3 and Act 2, Scene 4, in which Leonce experiences 'boredom', the dulling of sensual perception (Rosetta's scene) and, respectively, 'awakening' (the garden scenes). With these in mind, I went back to the beginning of the play and reconstructed the

transfiguration plot as follows:

Act 1, Scene 3. Leonce fails to reach ecstasy through hedonistic (libertine) practice. Dismissal of his mistress, Rosetta, whose dancing fails to entrance him (take him "out of time"). Leonce decides to leave the court and its waning pleasures.

Act 2, Scene 4. Leonce meets Lena in the garden of an inn at the crossroads of warring empires. The night is dark, but they immediately 'hear' each other and fall in love at 'first sight'. This is the moment of initiation for Lena and, respectively, of rebirth for Leonce. They experience amorous ecstasy upon their first embrace ("Let me be your angel of death").[28] Leonce decides to take his life (to prevent his inevitable return to boredom) but is saved in extremis by Valerio, who refuses him this cheap way to exit the world ("Are you finished with this Romantic fad fit for a sub-lieutenant?").[29] Leonce decides to marry Lena.

Act 3, Scene 2. Leonce and Lena conspire to flee the court of Popo where they have been brought, in shackles, after the royal police raids the inn. To facilitate their flight, Valerio builds two life sized automata, two perfect replicas of the prince and princess, and offers these replicas to King Pierre, who leads them to the altar. The fake bride and groom (the automata) take their place before the altar where the archbishop (possibly another automaton) initiates the marriage ceremony. Leonce and Lena are recognized by the *chambellan* but King Pierre refuses to stop the ceremony. Leonce and Lena attend the marriage of the automata from outside the circle of courtiers and subjects who witness the exchange of vows between their 'effigies'. *This is the moment of their transfiguration.*

The Epilogue. Leonce and Lena become king and queen of a mythical land (go "out of place and time"). Valerio declares himself prime minister of the mythical kingdom and decrees work (toiling, suffering) a sin punishable by death.

Valerio's last monologue, delivered after he joins his master's and mistress' voyage to Paradise, is most certainly the last speech of *Leonce and Lena,* but I think that it makes sense to consider it the epilogue of the transfiguration play. Firstly, because Valerio is the master of ceremony of both weddings and, in this quality, of the entire performance; and secondly, because his last speech resets the play on its comic foundation by way of ridiculing the 'romantic' ramblings of the new King Leonce:

> LEONCE. …in summer we'll distill the climate to the point it reaches in India and Capri and spend the whole year among roses and violets, among oranges and laurel…
>
> VALERIO. And I shall be Prime Minister, and we'll publish a decree that anyone who works till his hands are calloused shall be placed in protective custody; that anyone who works himself sick will be guilty of criminal offense; that anyone who boasts of eating his bread in the sweat of his brow ... shall be declared mad and dangerous to the community; and then we'll lie down in the shade and pray to God for macaroni, melons, and figs, for musical throats, and classical bodies, and an accommodating religion.[30]

This last 'artifice' resonates with the otherwise enigmatic motto, the literary pun which appears at the beginning of the script: *E la fama? E la fame?* (literally: "What about fame? What about famine?"); from the rhetorical perspective, the last scene in *Leonce and Lena* is an allegory of Love delivered in a language of sound and movement, of 'cry and gesture', whose compressed, essentialized form is the verbal pun.[31]

The new dramatic structure obtained by the intertwining of the profane and sacred plots in *Leonce and Lena* resonates with the hybrid structure of Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo.* Fo's epic reconstruction of the figure of the *giullaro* (medieval jester) is based on the *Nativitas rusticorum*

called “The Birth of a Peasant” (or “The Birth of the Villein”), a satirical poem by Matazone da Caligano written in between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[32]

Matazone's biography is a blank slate (he was, probably, a jester at the court of a medieval Italian prince) on which Dario Fo engraves his own image of the *giullaro* whom he identifies with the mythical ‘prankster’, an avatar of the Demon/Demiurge in medieval sacred drama.

The title of the poem, a pun playing on the meaning of the word ‘birth’ in ancient and modern languages—*nativitas* (Latin: ‘birth’*)* and *nativita* (Italian: ‘nativity’)—inspires Fo to articulate the loosely put together episodes of his epic on the opposition between sacred and profane modes of representation.

Concretely, the Jester plays the Peasant, the sacrificial ‘beast’, in the *Nativitas* monologue and the would-be Saviour (a poor man who offers to arrange Christ's escape from Golgotha) of Our Saviour in the Crucifixion play, which proves that the two modes can function together on stage by way of acting. Since the commedia dell’arte actor possesses a highly codified gestural and verbal vocabulary, the transition to the (unknown) rhetoric of the medieval is smoothened by the transfer of the acting vocabulary typical of the commedia player to the sacred player's means of expression.

Büchner's play does not build on the Christian iconography and is but vaguely related to the Christian legend, rites and lore. Except for the garden where Leonce and Lena experience amorous ecstasy, which may recall the garden of Eden, the Christian religion is strictly represented by its clergy, who are all comic types bordering on caricature. The only connection I could see was through music, and by extension, dance, and here, I could use again the rhetoric of the passions I had recovered through the *Witchcraft* experience.

The choice of music was even harder to make in view of the liturgical aspect of the marriage scene. The "Dance of Death", a medieval allegory performed at the end of the carnival which features men and women from every walk of life dancing towards their graves led by a skeleton, constituted a possible analogy with Rosetta's dance.

The “Dance of Death” started in the marketplace, wound down the streets of the town and stopped in the cemetery with the dancers collapsing from exhaustion over the tombs, sometimes followed by an orgy as coda to the event. It was a sort of collective exorcise the church frowned upon but mostly tolerated as a method of releasing the sexual tensions accumulated over the carnival period.

The drama, usually a dialogue in verse between Death and one of the mortals invited to hop and twirl with Him (a Knight, a Lady, a Bishop, a Child), preceded the dance and served to convey the moral message of the entertainment: *memento mori,* in life we are in death, pleasure is transitory, etc. Generally speaking, though, the state of trance induced by dancing was what attracted the participants.

If we look at the three love scenes in *Leonce and Lena*: Act 1, Scene 3 (Rosetta's dance); Act 2, Scene 4 (The Garden); and Act 3, Scene 2 (The Marriage of the Automata) we see that all three are built on a dance structure: a couple’s dance interrupted for Scene 3 (Rosetta's dance) representing the end of the affair between Rosetta and Leonce, and again, a couple’s dance completed for Act 2, Scene 4 representing the first encounter between Lena and Leonce (The Garden scenes); and, finally, a courtly dance involving a multitude of couples circling about the room for the wedding scene.

It seemed workable at first sight, except that I could not superimpose a mystery play on the Death theme to the mystery of Transfiguration of Leonce and Lena without wreaking

confusion among the audience. The Viennese waltz entered the picture as an ecstatic dance and the Transfiguration play was built as follows:

Prologue: Rosetta's dance to her grave with song and recitation (Leonce).

Scene One: The Garden of Eden. Leonce and Lena. Love choreography with sound and recitation (both) as the first couple in Paradise.

Scene Two: The Transfiguration. The waltz of the marionettes with recitation (King Pierre, Valerio, Governess) The Noises Chorale (All) King Pierre's waltz with woman spectator as dance partner.

Scene Three. Dance of the couple who shed their mortal bodies; dance of the automata who replace Leonce and Lena at the marriage ceremony. Dancing to Paradise/the state of 'grace' and 'beauty', "the infinite consciousness" only a puppet or a God can reach.[33] Freezing into pose of king, court, and marionettes. Gradual progression towards immobility of Leonce and Lena with recitation (Leonce) and slow-motion collapse into Pieta pose (Leonce and Lena).

Epilogue. Valerio's monologue. Recitation in standing position, arms closed about himself. Gestures from the choreography of the waltz were later on reworked into the gestural rhetoric of Leonce, Lena and Valerio.

The 2013 *Leonce and Lena* workshop was dedicated to the exploration of Act 1, Scene 2 and Act 3, Scene 2, (Leonce's last monologue and Valeria's epilogue), respectively, the beginning and the end of the eventual ecstatic performance.

The first series of improvisations dedicated to Scene 2 in Act 3 explored the sequences of the 'wave', 'whirlpool' and 'close embrace' composing the structure of the Viennese waltz. Each sequence was used alone, or in combination with another sequence, as a foundation for the gestural expression attached to the final monologues of Leonce and Valerio.

For example: Leonce's monologue describing his and Lena's ascension to Paradise was performed in synchronicity with the introduction to “The Blue Danube” by Johann Strauss II. Leonce stands hand in hand with Lena and leads the up-and-down movement mimicking the waves crashing against a shore.

The voice increases its volume with the rhythm of the waltz, from whisper to medium tone to high pitch in the last sentence: “We'll distill the climate to the point it reaches in India and Capri and spend the whole year among roses and violets, among oranges and laurel”.[34] Both figures collapse with this final utterance like puppets cut from their strings; Valerio faces the couple and moves with the music against the two bodies falling on him. After Leonce and Lena crumple to the floor, Valerio takes up the whirling sequence with arms extended on either side of his body until he collapses at his master's feet.

The preparatory phase was to teach the students the basic movements characterizing the Viennese waltz, insisting on the double rotation: inwards, around one's own axis, and outwards, the rotation of the couple around themselves and around the space. The waltz I played for this exercise was “The Blue Danube” by Johann Strauss II (Andre Rieu, violin), a slightly anachronistic version but which I thought (and was proven right) would be already known by most of the members of the group.

The immediate responses from the women who were unfamiliar with the dance were: irrepressible laughter (of the giggling variety) followed by languid hanging about the partner's neck or, in some cases, an uncontrollable urge to trip the partner, knock him down, wrestle, pinch and, generally, play childish pranks at the partner's expense.

The men who were at their first attempt to dance were stiff and resisting the embrace, later on avoiding repeated rotations and resisting in every way possible the vertigo produced by

those rotations.

The responses from the students, men and women, who knew how to dance were much more subdued but also showing excitement in continuous smiling, gradual relaxation of the arms, shutting of lids, dangerously bent necks (backwards), preference for high speed rotation and voluntary collapse at the end of the dancing.

All of them experienced vertigo at one point in the performance and with the few exceptions I mentioned before, all admitted to feeling highly ‘excited’ and ‘playful’ even after the break we had taken in between dancing sessions.

We started again, changing partners, and I asked the women to keep looking straight in the eyes of their partners all through the dance so as to have a ‘fixed point’ of reference during the rotation. The vertigo apparently increased but was spared the previous side effects of panic, embarrassment, or uncontrolled laughter and was felt as a liberation and joy by some of the experienced dancers, and qualified as “not so bad”, “confusing”, “aching” by some of the inexperienced ones.

The third time I asked both the women and the men to concentrate on the embrace, observe the position of the arms, head and torso at the beginning of the dance, then try to keep it throughout the performance in the initial configuration without pushing or going rigid if tired by the end of the performance.

The vertigo was weaker but the overall sensation of excitement persisted over the next exercise, which was devised as a rehearsal without music of the movements composing the dancers' entrance: the raising of the arms in mirroring position, the glissade of the women towards the men, putting the arms around each other, etc. until the embrace was completed and the couple was able to rotate without losing balance.

The same sequence was practiced in series of five dances with a change of partners in between series but in continuity, with women going from one man to the next clockwise for a duration of fifteen minutes. The goal was to concentrate on moving from one man's arms positioned for embracing the woman, to the next one's, without the woman relaxing the position of her arms (equally rounded for embracing her partner) and try to insert herself as smoothly as possible (no knocking or clasping) in her partner's arms.

Everybody was very tired by then—we were at the end of the session—but the dull, repetitive movement created a sort of ‘trance’, (‘zombie’ state, ‘remote control’ state) that was not unlike the weaker vertigo experienced in the controlled embrace exercise (with music).

The ultimate goal of these first exercises was for everybody to control the rotations without losing the connection with the partner, but I realized by the end of the session that composing and decomposing the embrace made in itself a sequence of movement with ecstatic portents for the woman especially (the man remains still during the process) which could be used as the basis for the gestural expression of the Leonce-Rosetta couple in Act 1, Scene 3.

We actually built the scene on this sequence and it brought some very interesting developments on behalf of the students who worked on Rosetta's dance of ‘death’.

The second series of exercises was dedicated to the ‘wave’ movement, the shifting of the weight from one foot to the other on the front step in standing position, men and women side by side facing forward, with a rise-and-fall movement in between landings.

The couple had to follow the rhythm of the music and synchronize their movements without looking at each other or touching the partner's arm. The main goal was to create a sensorial connection between partners that would eliminate the need for actual touching.

An unexpected result was that the rising and falling movement created in many of the

participants a sensation of ‘soaring’/‘abandonment’/‘flying’ so intense that they were moved to push the movement to the limit and, for the most part of the performance, everyone tripped, fell over, walked on the partner's foot at least once.

We did it again, looking at a fixed point on the wall (a poster of the last show, as it happened) and almost everyone succeeded in keeping their balance but lost some of the enjoyment felt in the previous attempt.

The ‘wave’ sequence proved easy to enact, physically, and at the same level of emotional intensity because of its inbuilt repetitiveness; it was like a ‘lullaby’ and it lulled the actors without fault into a state of ‘dreaminess’.

It became later the main gestural expression for the apotheosis of Leonce and Lena in Act 3, Scene 2, precisely for the effects of soaring (visually poignant) and dreaminess, the latter reconciling the students with the idea that the transfiguration event implies the death of the protagonists.

The last series of exercises was dedicated to the insertion of the dance sequence in the gestural component of the roles. For Act 1, Scene 3, Leonce was asked to use the entrance sequence halfway through to express his failure to get aroused. Gradually, he had to slow down his movements till reaching total stillness, then let his body go limp to resist Rosetta's attempts to make him regain his entrance stance. Rosetta was asked to use the same exercise with special focus on the unraveling of her dance sequence in response to Leonce's refusal to perform.

Both Rosetta and Leonce had to follow the rhythm of the waltz (“The Blue Danube”) which played in the background for the duration of Leonce's monologue, and again at Rosetta's exit, as much as possible, in all their enactments (speech and movement) throughout the scene.

One of the most interesting results of this exercise was that Rosetta's dance, supposedly

‘mechanical’ at the beginning of the scene (a series of inner rotations strictly timed by the length of the musical piece with a formal bow at the end of the sequence) and more 'wild' after Leonce dismisses her, functioned precisely in reverse.

The entrance sequence became ‘wild’, in the sense that the choreography took a clearly erotic turn in the opening sequence (bodies touching hip to hip, arms languidly thrown around necks, shortened breath), while the exit looked ‘mechanical’ because of the ‘robotic’ aspect of the choreography.

The motivations varied from one player to the other but, essentially, all the women felt that the first dance was one of ‘seduction’ while the second was simple ‘routine’, a way to ‘save face’, ‘fill the void’, and so on. The one trained dancer in the group kept to the initial formula—the composition and decomposition of the choreography—but with a ‘twist’ to each sequence that subtly reversed its initial meaning.

She increased the speed of her rotations in the entrance sequence till her spinning looked more ‘frantic’ than playful, then reduced the speed in the exit sequence so drastically that the entire choreography looked like a ‘sleepwalking spell’ so the effect was the same: excited at the beginning, broken-hearted at the end.

Another interesting interpretation of the initial proposal came from the one totally inexperienced dancer in the group who literally copied the choreography for *The Dying Swan* piece by Saint-Saëns and Petipa at the beginning of the scene and then literally broke it to pieces and made each movement look 'separate' or 'severed' from the ensemble.

Her motivation was: “I’m filled with love for Leonce, I would die for him” and “I’m empty now, I can't move like before"; despite this rationalization of the scene, the erotic intensity of the entrance sequence increased ten times over with the death imagery imported from Petipa’s

choreography.

The men worked in reaction to the women's exercise so their choreographies varied drastically from one scene to the other; still, three out of the five male players in the group succeeded to maintain a line of movement consistent with Leonce's characteristic of boredom and all its effects: cruelty, irritation, restlessness, despair, etc.

All three played their entrance in quasi-slow motion so as to suggest weariness, nightmarish experience, weakness, and replayed the same choreography at the end of the dance which enhanced the trancelike atmosphere of the scene.

For the excerpt from Act 3, Scene 2 (Leonce's last monologue/Valerio's epilogue speech), I asked Leonce to deliver his lines while performing the 'wave' sequence with increasing speed, then collapse with the last line.

Lena was to stand by his side and follow his movements, collapse included. Valerio was asked to oppose Leonce's rise-and-fall movements by keeping his standing position in front of the couple as long as he could. After they fell down, he had to deliver his monologue while spinning around his own axis and collapse after the last line, precisely in between Leonce and Lena's lying bodies.

By this time, it had become clear for everyone that this was an ‘ecstatic’ act, so the real challenge was in finding the balance between personal excitement and ecstatic performance.

However, the men had to change roles, which meant that they had to compose two different kinds of ecstatic performance: one for Leonce, the other for Valerio, who would begin by opposing his master's 'rising' movements and later on would have to follow his collapse without losing the comic overtones of his role.

One immediate difficulty was for Valerio to oppose the ‘wave’ movement, as face-to-

face opposition proved nearly impossible to perform. The couple was gaining momentum with every rising movement and the men playing Valerio simply could not contain the two-bodied force coming full blast against them.

We tried to solve the problem by making Valerio turn his back on the couple, but this was even more ‘scary’ as Valerio could not see what ‘hit’ him and tended to lose his balance with every ‘wave’ crashing against his frame. Finally, we settled for Valerio's following the movements of the couple, and this proved to be the right solution.

When Leonce and Lena collapsed, Valerio was left without a ‘support’ for his back-and-forth movement (by the end of the scene Valerio was effectively leaning back into Leonce's chest) and this made room for the transition between the two types of spoken delivery.

Only one of the men chose to rotate during Valerio's speech, admittedly because those speedy rotations put him in a state of trance he could control, and that made him continue to be ‘happy’ while preparing to join his master in death. He also played the transition in ‘drunken’ fashion—stumbling about, arms flailing—until he got into the right position for spinning, which was a way to remind us that his was essentially a comic role.

Another very beautiful performance was choreographed like a classical ballet solo, in which the ‘soaring’ effect of the previous exercise (the ‘wave’ movement of the couple), transformed into leaps and pirouettes à la Nijinsky, was gently mocking Leonce's movements but also amplifying them, giving them a true ‘transcendental’ dimension.

[1] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 12-14.

[2] Ibid, 15.

[3] Ibid, 15.

[4] Ibid, 11-12.

[5] Ibid, 11-12.

[6] Ibid, 12.

[7] Jean I. Marsden, *Theatres of Feeling: Affect, Performance and the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[8] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination,* 12.

[9] Giovan Battista Andreini, quoted in Emily Wilbourne, "*Lo Schiavetto* (1612): Travestied Sound, Ethnic Performance, and the Eloquence of the Body," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63, no. 1 (2010): 1-43; Wilbourne, "*Lo Schiavetto"*, 6-7.

[10] De' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche*, 48-49, quoted in Wilbourne, "*Lo Schiavetto*", 1.

[11] Wilbourne, "*Lo Schiavetto*", 7.

[12] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination,* 66.

[13] Ibid, 66.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Büchner, *Leonce and Lena,* 1.3.

[16] Ibid, 1.3.

[17] Ibid, 1.3.

[18] Ibid, 1.3.

[19] Ibid, 1.3.

[20] Ibid, 1.3.

[21] Ibid, 1.4.

[22] Ibid, 2.3.

[23] Giovanni Battista Andreini, *La Centaura,* vol. 3 (Il Nuovo Melangolo, 2004). My translation.

[24] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

[25] Ibid.

[26] Büchner, *Leonce and Lena,* 3.2.

[27] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

[28] Büchner, *Leonce and Lena,* 2.4.

[29] Ibid, 2.4.

[30] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

[31] Ibid.

[32] General details on Matazone from Nicolino Applauso, "Peasant Authors and Peasant Haters: Matazone da Caligano and the Ambiguity of the 'Satira Del Villano' in High and Late Medieval Italy (2012)" in *Rural Spaces in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, eds. Albrecht Classen and Christopher Clason (De Gruyter, 2012): 607-38.

[33] Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theatre," *The Drama Review: TDR* 16, no. 3 (1972): 22-26.

[34] Büchner, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck.*

Epilogue

My account on the journey to the origins of the modern drama stops here: to try and describe the actual staging of the plays dissected in the course of my exploration would be a thankless task for myself and the least enjoyable part of the story for all who peruse this account. For theatre is still an affair of the eye however much we endeavour to rationalize it, something that the eighteenth-century thinkers who 'dabbled' in drama perfectly understood and had no fear to acknowledge.

I built the *Addenda* on the structure of a *photo-roman* precisely for this purpose: to capture in this modern form of picture-writing the stories of *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie and *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner as they were performed on the Montreal stage and offer this quick view of their fleeting existence to those who have not seen them live. In some sense, I emulated Diderot and produced my own hieroglyphs; this is not the only way in which I emulated his fanciful interpretations of the unseen and the unsayable.

You would have recognized in my descriptions of the workshops I conducted on matters of acting for the melodrama: the idea of going back and forth between paintings and theatrical images came from Diderot's description of his meanderings through his 'imaginary museum', which I took literally and materialized in the reproductions of famous paintings through gestural expressions that 'vivified' the stage tableaux composed for the actual representation of *Witchcraft* and *Leonce and Lena*. I use the term 'reproduction' freely because what Diderot wants to achieve by creating the concept of theatrical tableau is contrary to the reproduction of famous paintings by living people in the *tableaux vivants*, that form of 'domestic' entertainment that was all the rage in his time and continued to be a most successful type of amateur show well into the nineteenth century. He did not mean to give life to static scenes and attitudes borrowed from the masters in the imaginary or real galleries he haunted but to translate the movement

(which represents life) captured in the paintings and art works he described into theatrical pictures. There is no 'static' scene, no pose or attitude he wants reproduced or copied ad infinitum on stage or in the closed spaces of domestic existence, be that aristocratic salon or bourgeois parlour; the problem is that this translation cannot be done without yet another literal interpretation of the word 'movement' as 'bodily movement'. That this 'bodily movement' is driven by breathing is a matter of course; once we realize that the theatrical tableau imagined by Diderot is a visual representation of the *souffle vital,* and that this vital *souffle* translates literally as 'breathing', the immobility of the *tableau vivant* becomes the immobility of a cadaver. It is an interpretation I found not only enlightening but breathtaking in its literality; it came to me after I read (consulted, perused) the *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* by J.J. Engel and Henry Siddons in which movement is the object of study, not gesture, whatever the title states. Gesture is codified movement and codification is not the primary purpose of the Engel-Siddons project; again, terms like action, motion, soul, nature, life are freely used by the thinkers of the Enlightenment but then they were extremely bold in everything they did, or thought, or depicted. It is only to be expected that the German philosopher called Johann Jacob Engel would use words as freely as his French counterpart, the encyclopedist named Diderot; they both 'dabbled' in disciplines that were not theirs by trade, or acquired by scholarly training and made inroads in fields that had been thoroughly plowed by specialists to no avail.

Being in their company made me bold as well. I used breathing, literally, to 'animate' the pictures of Medea and Ajax, the Illustrations of Joy, Anger, Persuasion, Innocent Love; and it was music as modulated breathing which drove the 'classical' bodies I conjured up for the characters in *Witchcraft* and *Leonce and Lena*.

Sometimes, the terms I used to describe melodrama were common terms, and the tone of

my essay shifted often towards the conversational tone of the eighteenth-century works on drama I chose to quote. But common terms—not overused, only colloquial—suit the stage and suit the discourse about popular theatre; melodrama is steeped in popular culture and even though its appearance as a new form of dramaturgy is due to poets who had no real experience of the stage, the stage idiom is, I think, the best vehicle for the concept.

In point of fact, what I endeavoured to do in my present account was to translate in theatre 'parlance', wherever necessary, the theoretical vocabulary of recent studies in melodrama and imagology; it was a condition sine qua non as the acting language I attempted to rebuild had to be fully understood by the practitioners involved in the experiment.

The beauty of it all is that in rebuilding a lost stage idiom, I remodeled the actual vocabulary of the twenty-first-century actors I worked with; and I do think it is important to rethink theatre in theatre terms if we want to determine the specificity of the medium.

I have thoroughly avoided to tackle the moral-ethical component of the melodrama because of the ever-shifting connotations of the word 'morality' or even 'ethics'; the moral codes have changed and changed again from the time when Baillie and Büchner wrote *Witchcraft* and, respectively, *Leonce and Lena,* and modern codes do not apply to the classical world. And if we want to represent 'good' or 'evil' or anything related to moral categories, we'll always have the device of personification at hand; what we have to recover is the dimension of sacrality the Romantic authors gave to their creations.

One last thought: the Romantic drama (to which I include 'classical' melodrama) is the last theatrical mode that favours codified movement. Time and again, a bold artist takes up the mission, invents a gestural code like Meyerhold and Grotowski, or reinvents one that had been long lost like Barrault, Strehler, Dario Fo; but the richness of invention that defines the Romantic

expression remains unexplored in that respect.

Classical Bodies, Musical Throats and an Accommodating Religion is, in this sense, the story of my first attempt at recovering the gestural codes of the Romantic theatre.

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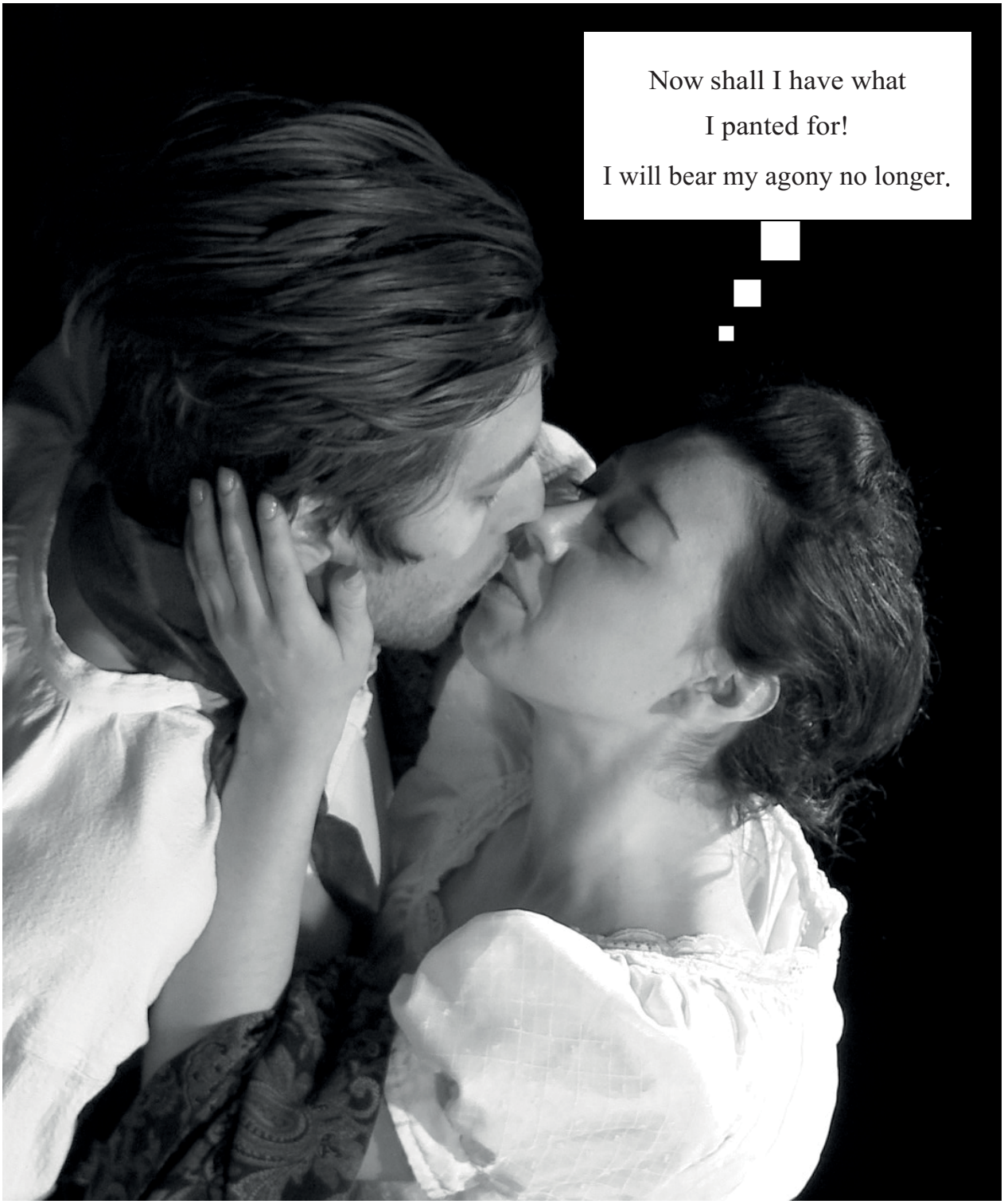
Appendix 1: *Witchcraft* Photo Library

Embraces

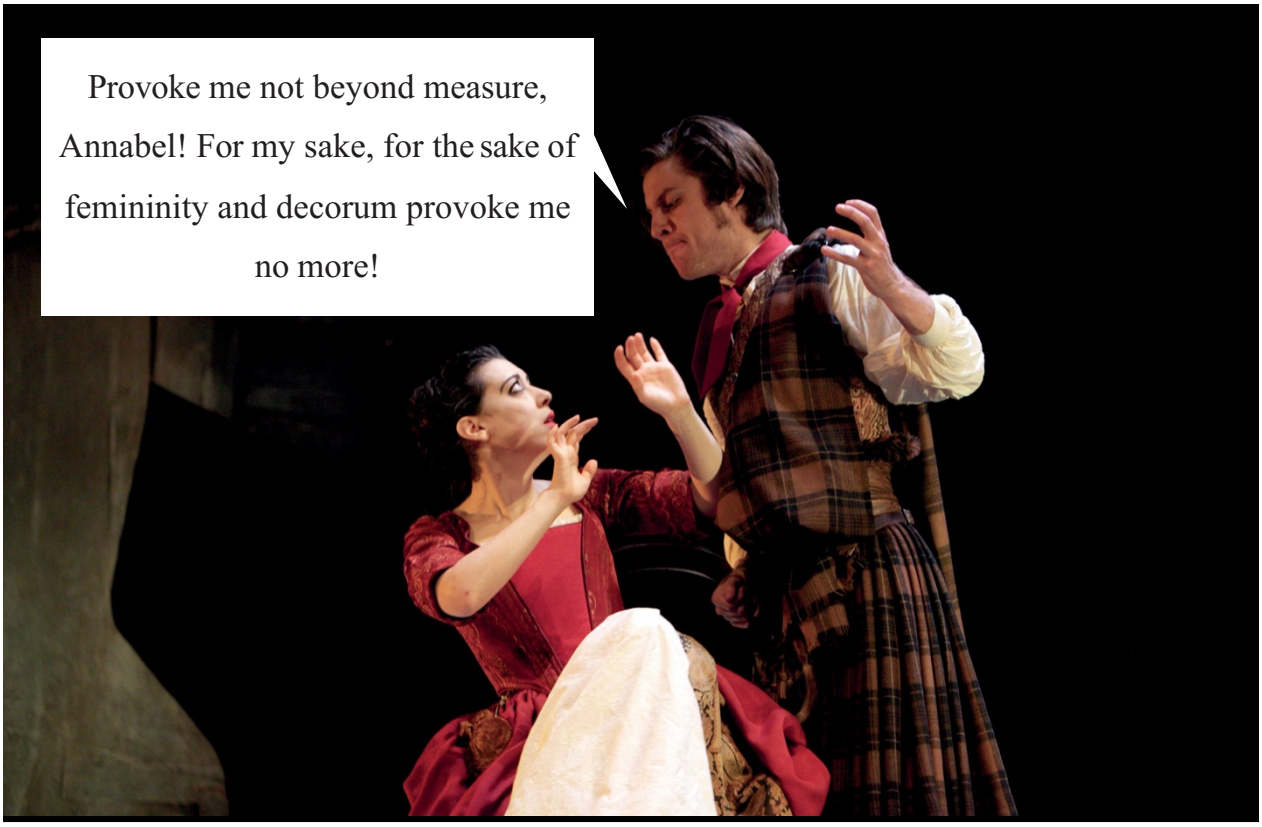
from *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie

Evil seduction

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*



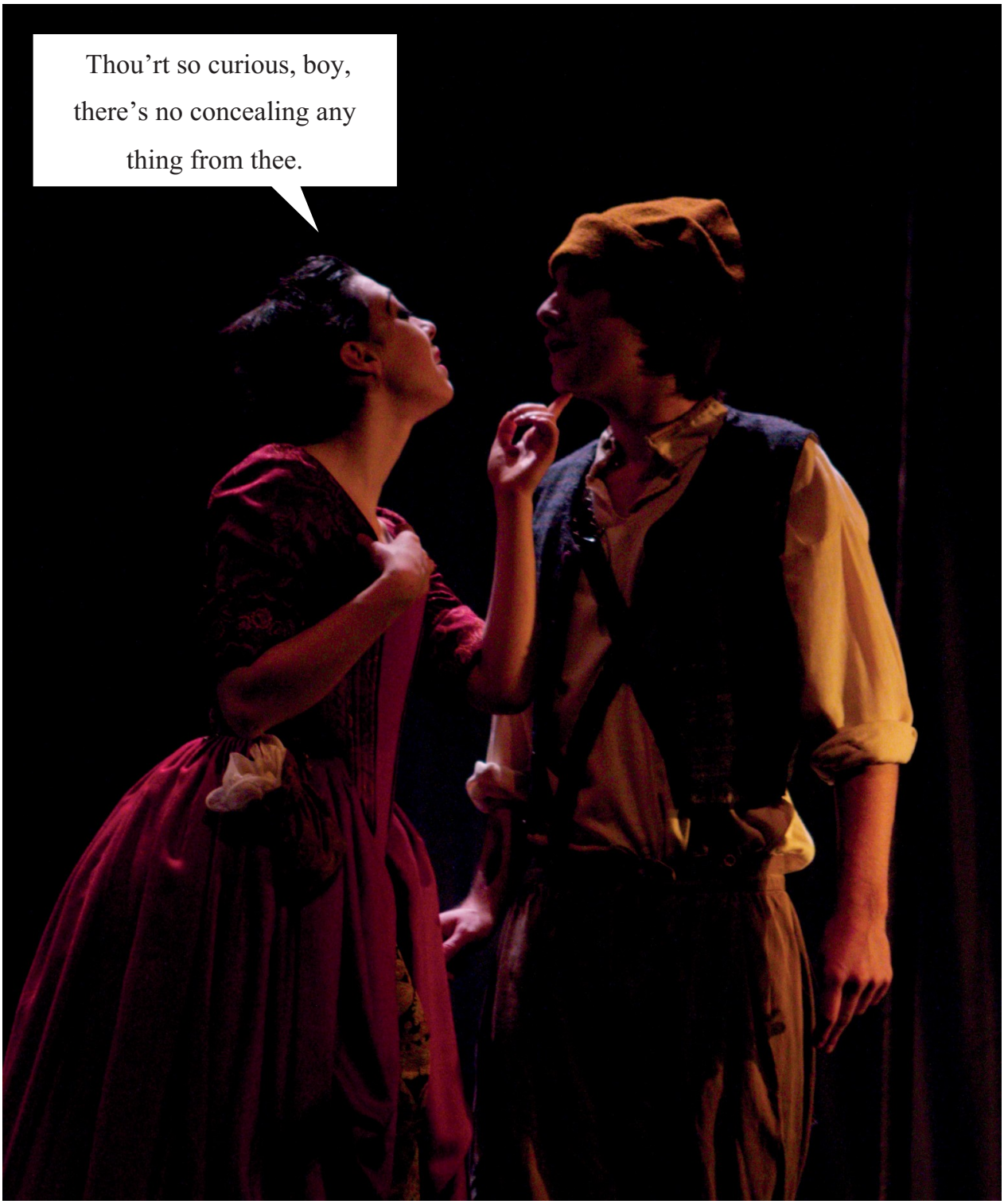
Lady Annabel (Natasha Perry Fagant) and Robert Dungarren (Jake Zabusky).


Provoke me not beyond measure, Annabel! For my sake, for the sake of femininity and decorum provoke me no more!


Not so unseemly, Dungarren, as degrading the heir of an honourable house!

Playful seduction

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*



Lady Annabel (Natasha Perry Fagant) and Black Bawldy (Graham Berlin).


And thou shalt know the whole…

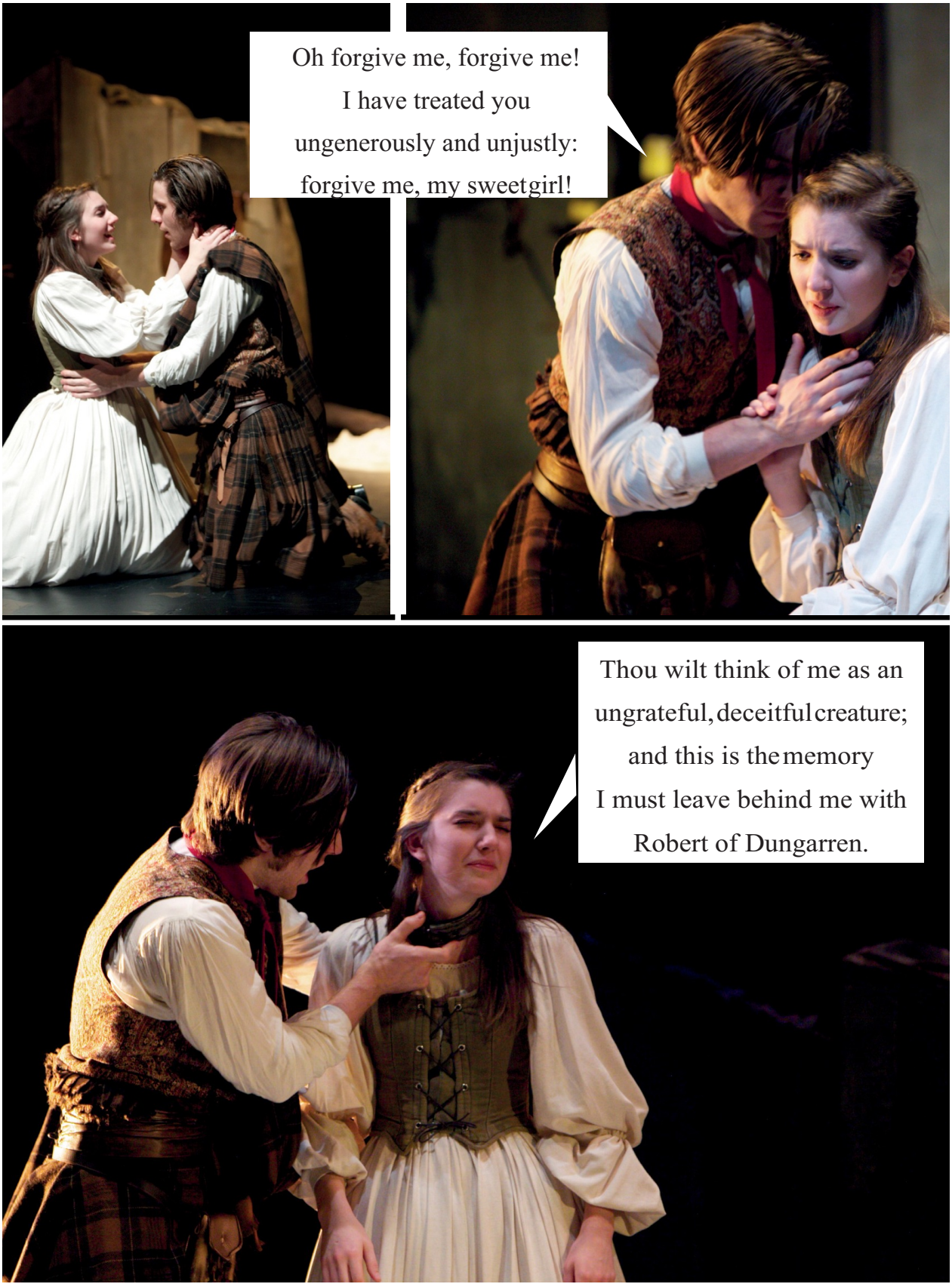

I'll tell nae body…


Never trouble thy head about that…Do as I bid thee, and thou wilt soon find it good.

Young love

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*

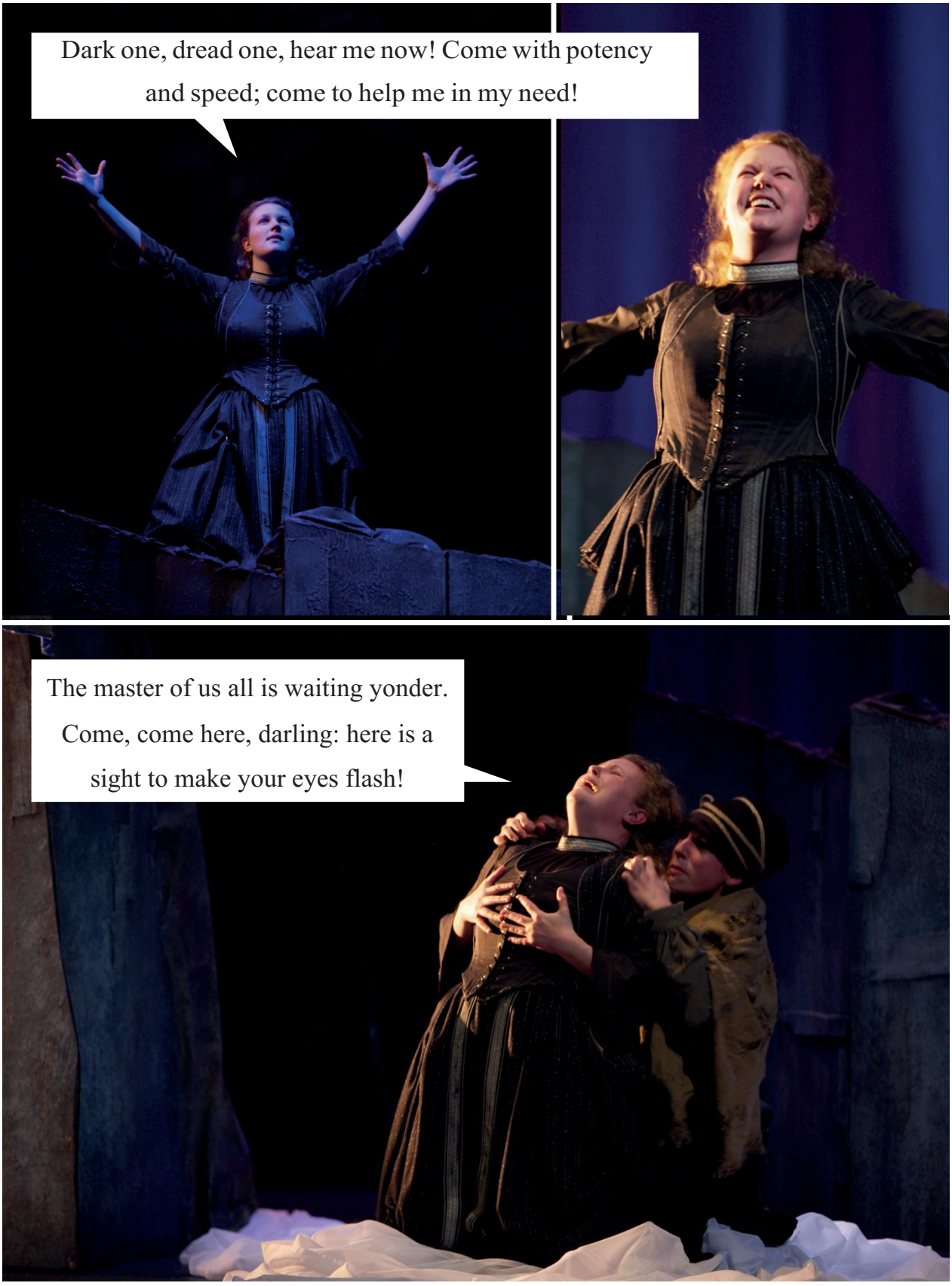
Robert Dungarren (Jake Zabusky) and Violet Murray (Miranda Abraham)


Oh forgive me, forgive me!
I have treated you
ungenerously and unjustly:
forgive me, my sweetgirl!
Thou wilt think of me as an
ungrateful, deceitful creature;
and this is the memory
I must leave behind me with
Robert of Dungarren.

Resuscitation

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*

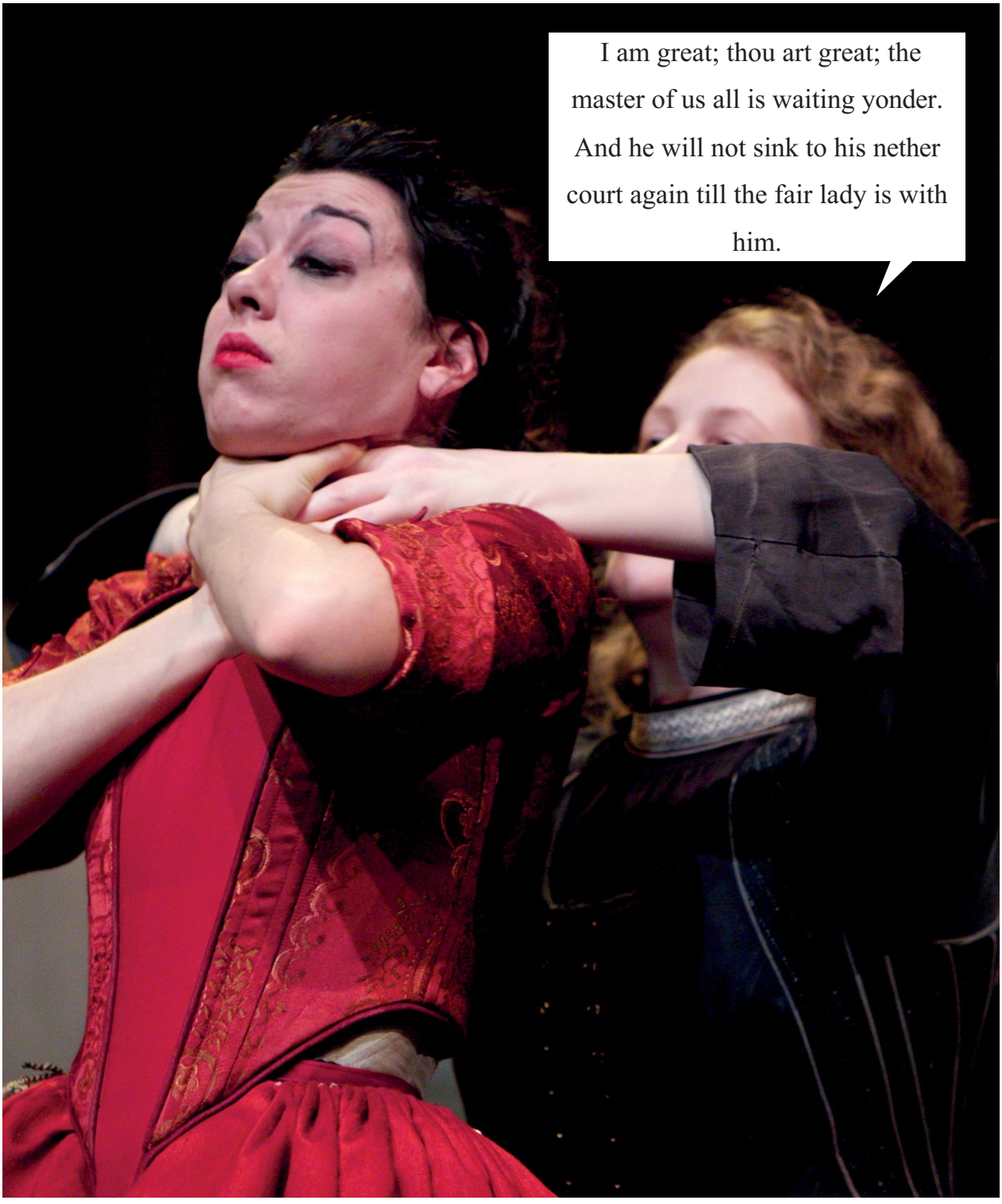
Grizeld Bane (Miriam Cummings) and Robert Dungarren (Jake Zabusky)



Grizeld Bane (Miriam Cummings) and Wilkin (Greg Walker)

Persuasion refuted

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*



Lady Annabel (Natasha Perry Fagant) and Grizeld Bane (Miriam Cummings)






Exercises

from *Witchcraft* by Joanna Baillie

Young love

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*

https://vimeo.com/40954807 © Nina Khandjani

Robert Dungarren (Robert Montcalm) and Violet Murray (Reghina Draghici)

Thirst-Lust

from Witchcraft 2011 *photo © Tristan Brand.*

video https://vimeo.com/38203055 © Nina Khandjani

Black Bawldy (Darien Pons) and Anderson (Cameron Sedgwick)

Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action
by Engel, Johann Jakob, 1741-1802

video https://vimeo.com/38203055 https://vimeo.com/40954807 © Nina Khandjani

Black Bawldy (Darien Pons) and Anderson (Cameron Sedgwick)

Lady Annabel (Natasha Perry Fagant) and Grizeld Bane (Miriam Cummings)

Arab Horses Fighting in a Stable by Eugene Delacroix

The Attic (acoustic guitar)

http://resonance.hexagram.ca/witchcraft/#/year3

Robert Dungarren (Robert Montcalm) and Violet Murray (Reghina Draghici)

Ajax maudissant les dieux (1820) Henri Serrur
© Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille

Appendix 2: *Leonce and Lena* Photo Library

A Sacred Dance

from *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner

Dance of Death. Rosetta's Waltz.

from Leonce and Lena 2011 *photo © video Pablo Pugliese.* video: https://youtu.be/zS5-xlnDUrA

Rosetta (Myriame Larose) Valerio (Erick Tremblay) Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie). Music (Live): Ralph Denzer.

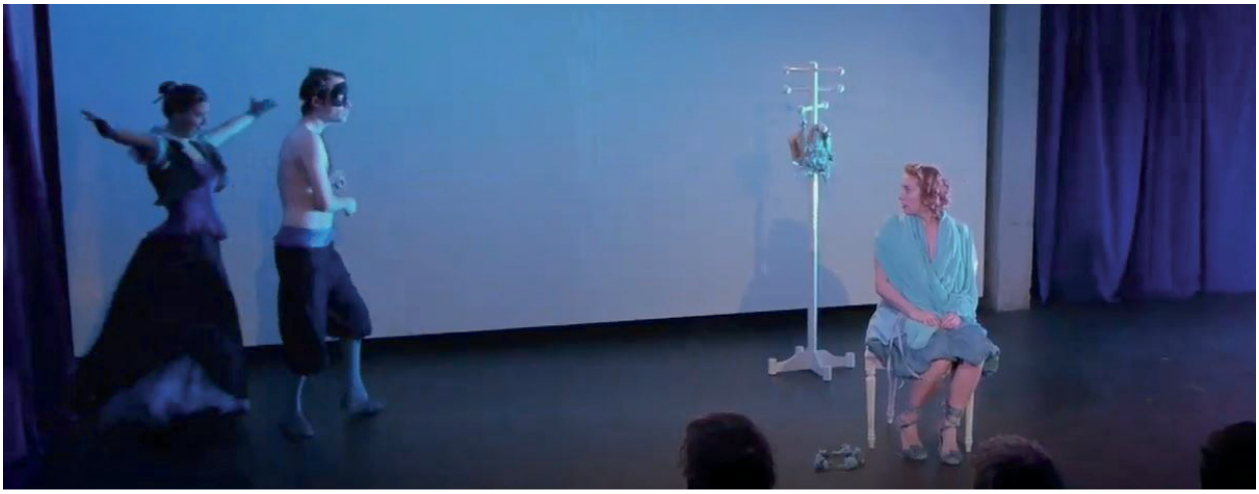
Mes pieds fatigués, vous qui dansez dans vos chaussures bigarrées / mieux feriez de dormir, la sous la terre vous reposer.

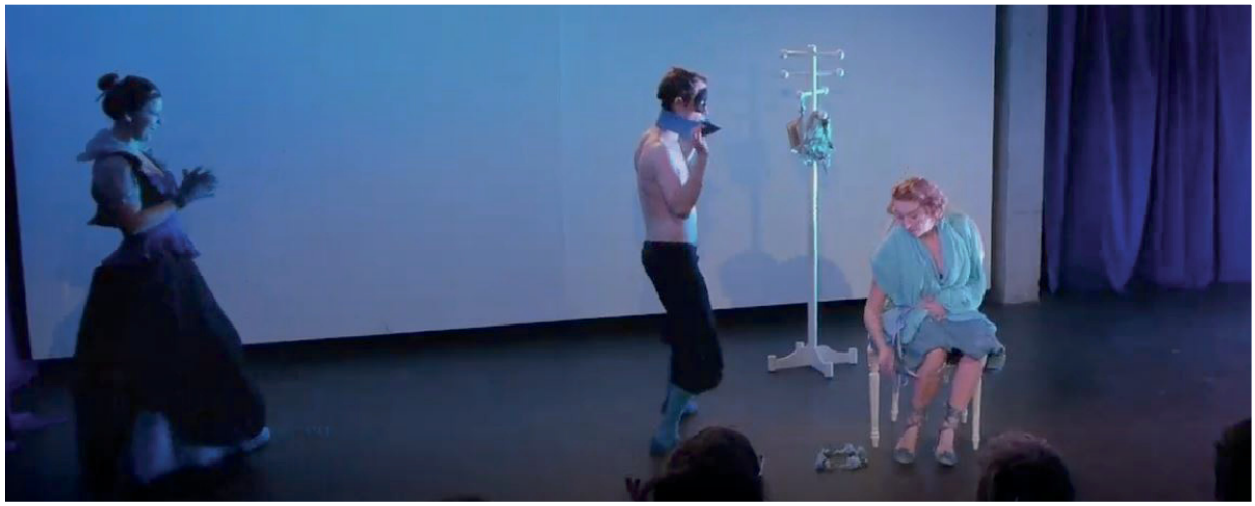
Rosetta (Myriame Larose) Valerio (Erick Tremblay) Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie). Music (Live): Ralph Denzer.


Adieu, mon amour!
Je vais aimer ton cadavre.

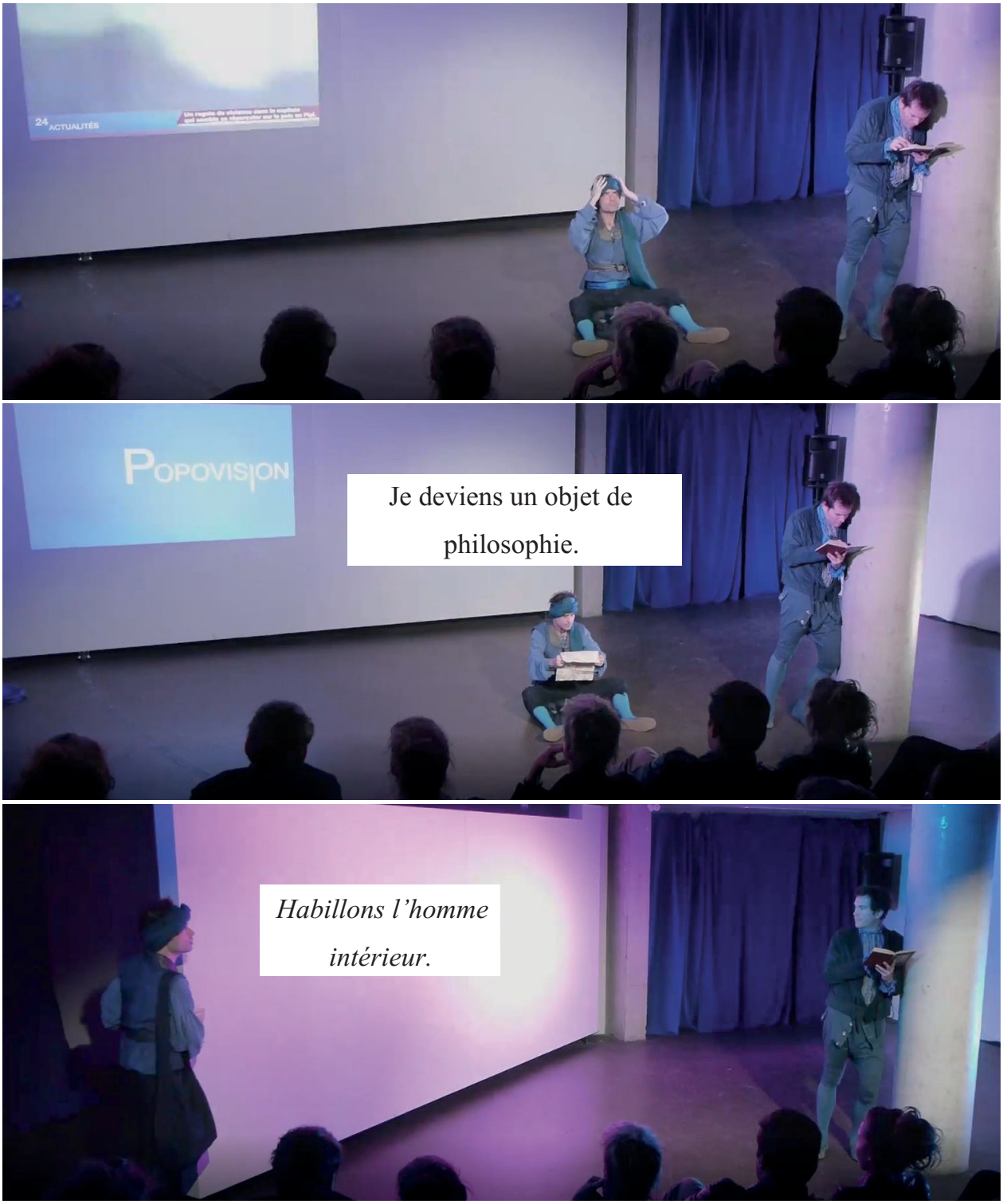
The Garden Of Eden.

from Leonce and Lena 2011 photo © video Pablo Pugliese. video: https://youtu.be/DcL9xaqtrDQ





Satyr's Dance. Jazz. Satyr/Valerio: Erick Tremblay (with Lena and Governess).

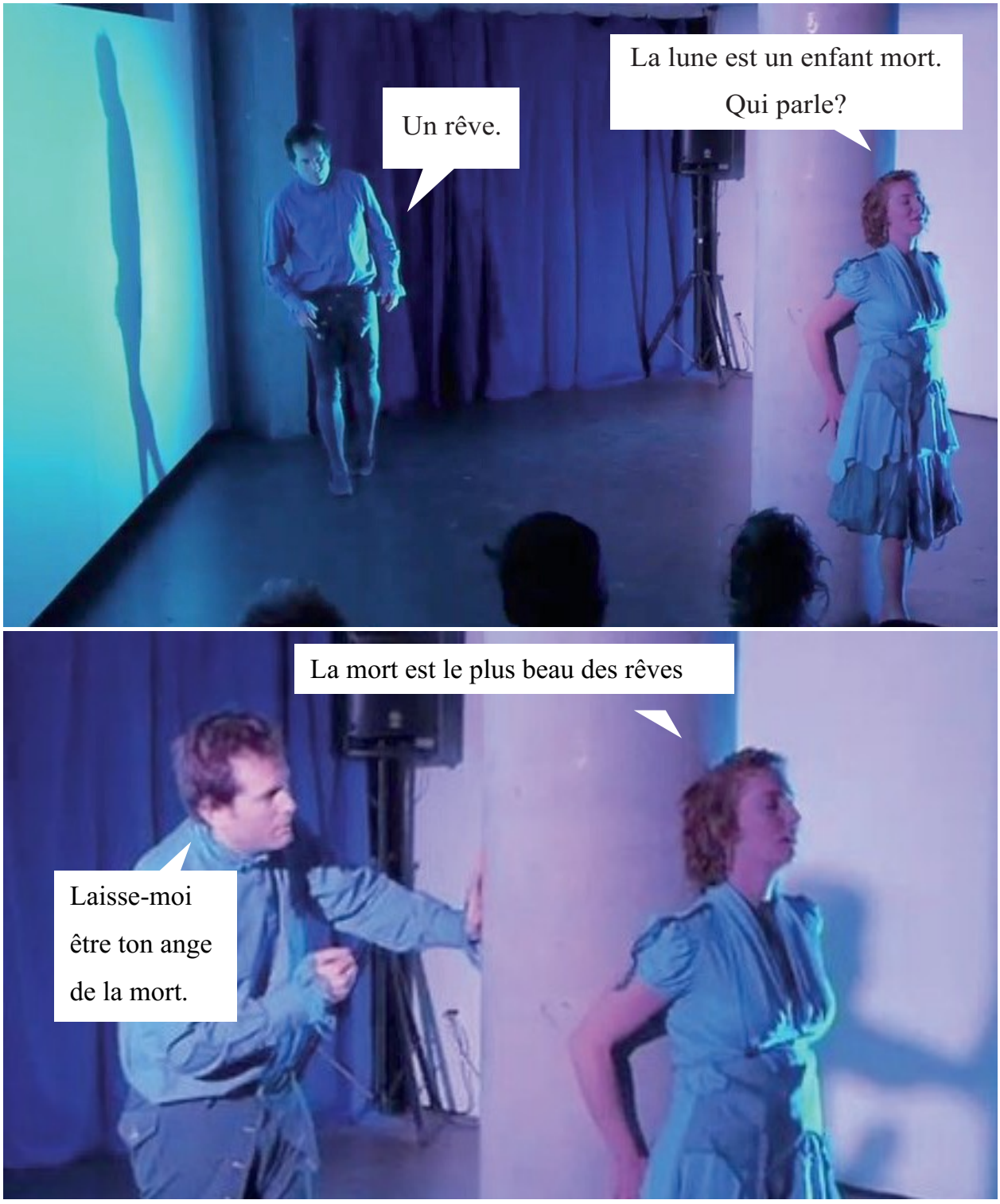


Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Valerio (Erick Tremblay).

Lena (Marie Pascale) Governess (Josee Lacombe).

Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Valerio (Erick Tremblay).

Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Lena (Marie Pascale).


La lune est un enfant mort.
Qui parle?
Un rêve.
La mort est le plus beau des rêves
Laisse-moi
être ton ange
de la mort.

Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Lena (Marie Pascale).

Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Valerio (Erick Tremblay).

Wedding Waltz Puppets.

from Leonce and Lena 2011 *photo © video Pablo Pugliese.*

Wedding Waltzing Puppets

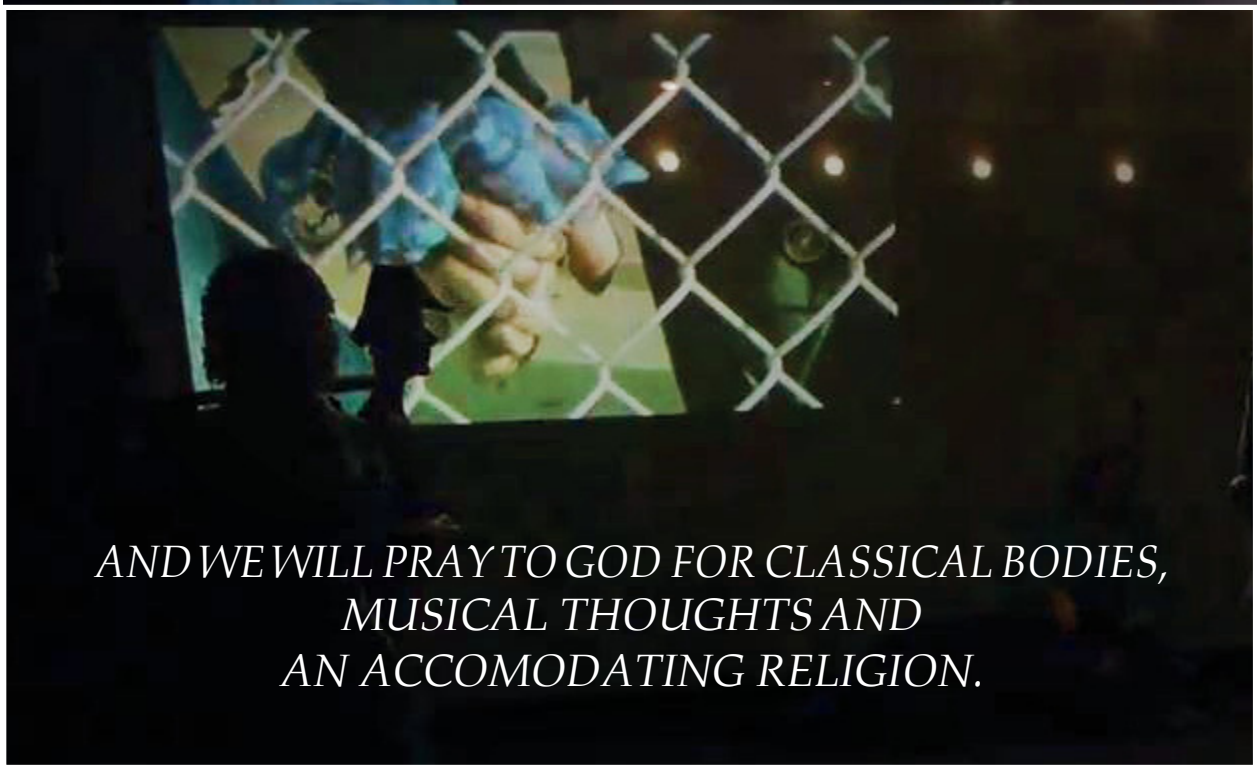
Waltzing Heads

Puppeteers: Valerio (Erick Tremblay) Governess (Josee Lacombe).

Leonce (Frederic Jeanrie) Lena (Marie Pascale).


Et nous nous coucherons à l'ombre et prierons Dieu de nous donner des macaroni, des figues et des melons!


Et de nous accorder des corps classiques, des gorges musicales et une religion accommodante!


AND WE WILL PRAY TO GOD FOR CLASSICAL BODIES,
MUSICAL THOUGHTS AND
AN ACCOMODATING RELIGION.